



**THE NEGRO IN  
AMERICAN NATIONAL  
POLITICS**



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POLITICS

BY

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## Introduction

**T**HE object of this study is to discover the activities and position of the Negro in Congress, in the National Conventions, the Presidential Campaigns, and in the Federal administrations. It aims also to point out certain political ideas and factors which have contributed to the Negro's advancement in National politics since 1868. If, in a few instances, material of local or international purport has been introduced, it was done only with a view toward emphasizing a relation to certain phases of National Politics.

This study, though general in nature, does not attempt to give a solution to the perplexing problems involved. It points out the past, focuses upon the present with a view towards emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive and well balanced program for the Negro's future in National Politics.

That the subject of this thesis is important is attested by the widespread discussions in our newspapers and magazines during the last three years.

WILLIAM F. NOWLIN.



## Contents

I. Early Negro Congressmen . . . .	1
II. The Present Negro Congressman . .	35
III. The Negro in the National Conventions	41
IV. In the National Campaigns . . . .	79
V. In the National Administrations . .	105
VI. Political Ideas and Contributing Factors	128



# THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS



## CHAPTER I

### Early Negro Congressmen 1870-1901

**I**T is the purpose of chapters one and two to appraise the activities of the Negro legislators, in order to show their peculiar position in Congress, and the services rendered to the localities which elected them.

#### PREPARATION

The Negroes who served in Congress from 1870 to 1901, may be divided, broadly speaking, into two groups:<sup>1</sup> first, those who possessed but limited education; second, those who attended or graduated from college.

Of those comprising the first group, certain characteristic qualities are noticeable: first, they were mainly members of the earliest Reconstruc-

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, A. A., "Negro Congressmen a Generation After," *Journal of Negro History*, VII, 129-180.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

tion Congresses, beginning with the Forty-first, and thus only a few years removed from slavery; second, some of them were born of slave parents, or had been slaves themselves; third, others were brought up in communities which expressly prohibited the establishment of educational institutions for Negroes; and fourth, all of them seemed by dint of application to have secured more than a rudimentary education. This group includes Jefferson F. Long of Georgia; Robert C. Delarge, Joseph H. Rainey, Alonzo J. Ransier and Robert Small of South Carolina; John R. Lynch, Jere Haralson and Benjamin Sterling Turner of Alabama; John Adams Hyman of North Carolina; Charles E. Nash of Louisiana, and Josiah T. Walls of Florida.

Some of the Negro Congressmen were men of college education. One of these became a minister of the gospel. Richard H. Cain<sup>3</sup> of South Carolina, though born in Virginia in 1825, moved with his father to Gallipolis, Ohio in 1831, and after being trained at Wilberforce University, left in 1861 for a career in his chosen field. Cain was for four years the pastor of a church in Brooklyn, N. Y., after which his congregation sent him as a missionary to the freedmen of South Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, A. A., "Negro Congressmen a Generation After," *Journal of Negro History*, VII, 131-132.

<sup>4</sup>*Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927*, pp. 774-775.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

Henry P. Cheatham<sup>4</sup> of North Carolina, George A. Murray<sup>5</sup> of South Carolina and John Mercer Langston<sup>6</sup> of Virginia were educators. Cheatham attended the public and private schools near the town of Henderson, N. C., and was later graduated with honor from the college department of Shaw University. Shortly thereafter he was appointed principal of the Plymouth State Normal School where he served until 1895. George Murray of South Carolina won by competitive examination a scholarship at the reconstructed University of South Carolina. There he remained until 1876, his junior year, when, through an administration unfriendly to the co-education of the races he was forced to withdraw. For a number of years he taught in the public schools of his county.<sup>7</sup>

Of the several Negroes who sat in Congress up to 1901, five were members of the legal profession. One of these men represented Alabama, two South Carolina, and two North Carolina. Robert Brown Elliott,<sup>8</sup> the first member of this group of legally trained leaders, was perhaps the most outstanding and the most brilliant of the Negroes who have served in Congress. Elliott entered the

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 1774-1927, p. 805.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1847.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1202-1203.

<sup>7</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.*, 1774-1927, p. 940.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

High Holborn Academy of London, England in 1853, at the age of eleven. In 1859 he was graduated from Eton College. Later he studied law and was admitted to the bar where he practiced for some time before the courts of South Carolina. This superior training of Elliott no doubt contributed in a large measure to his eminence in debate which was so often manifested during the memorable sessions of the Forty-second and Forty-third Congresses.

James T. Rapier of Alabama,<sup>9</sup> one of the really brilliant men in this group, acquired a liberal education after which he studied law and practiced in his native state. James E. O'Hara,<sup>10</sup> also of the legal group, acquired a liberal education, studied law in North Carolina and at Howard University, and in June, 1871, he was admitted to the bar of his State. Thomas E. Miller<sup>11</sup> of Beaufort, S. C., attended the free public school for Negroes in his native city. In 1872 he was graduated from the Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, read law and in 1873 was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of his State. George Henry White, the last of the Negro Reconstruction Congressmen, studied first in his native State and later at Howard University, where he pursued concur-

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1445.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1369.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1315.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

rently courses in liberal arts and in law. Later he was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of his State.

### EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC POSITIONS

Indeed, one may with great ease establish the fact that with but few exceptions these men, prior to their election to Congress, had held public offices. John Mercer Langston of Virginia, while never a member of a State Legislature, was nevertheless brought often into other public services.<sup>12</sup> He early attracted attention in Ohio by his service as a member of the village council of Oberlin, and by his record in township offices. Langston served as a member of the Board of Health of the District of Columbia, and was invited by General Howard to act as Inspector-General of the Bureau, Dean of the Law Department of Howard University, and eventually as Vice President and Acting President of that institution. In 1885 he became President of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. He had previously served as Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti, and *chargé d'affaires* to Santo Domingo, a career of experience and success—not in his home State, however.

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<sup>12</sup>Langston, J. M., *From Virginia Plantation to the Capitol*, pp. 168-169.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Hyman,<sup>13</sup> O'Hara, Cheatham, and White,<sup>14</sup> all of North Carolina, had held public offices prior to their election to Congress. Hyman and White had each been members of the State Senate, the former for six years, from 1868 to 1874, while O'Hara and White had each served in the lower house of the Legislature. Hyman had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1868, while O'Hara, who had also served as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Halifax, had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1875.

From 1886 to 1894, White served as Prosecuting Attorney for the Second Judicial District of the State, while Cheatham, another member of the North Carolina delegation, had served as Register of Deeds for Vance County.

Each of the six Negro Reconstruction Congressmen from South Carolina—Cain, Delarge,<sup>15</sup> Elliott, Rainey,<sup>16</sup> Ransier and Small,<sup>17</sup> were members of the State Constitutional Conventions of 1868. Cain and Rainey had been formerly State Senators. Small had served two terms in the Senate and four in the House. While each of the others had been members of the lower branch of

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<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 1136.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1690.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 896.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1440.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1532-1533.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

the Legislature. Ransier had held the high office of Lieutenant-Governor of the State. Elliott had served as Adjutant-General, and Small had held the offices of Lieutenant-Colonel, Brigadier-General and Major-General in the State Militia.

Of the two Negro Congressmen from South Carolina who served after the Reconstruction period, Thomas E. Miller was for four years a member of the State Legislature. He was a member of the Senate for one term, County School Commissioner, and a party nominee for the office of Lieutenant-Governor of the State. Indeed, of the entire South Carolina group, Murray alone seems to have been elected to Congress without previously having held public office.<sup>18</sup>

John R. Lynch<sup>19</sup> of Mississippi served not only as Justice of the Peace, but also two terms in the lower House of the Legislature, during the latter of which he was the Speaker of that body. Nash of Louisiana, unlike Lynch of Mississippi, held office for the first time when his State elected him a Representative to Congress.

From accessible records and from impartial and unbiased historians, it is contended that with a few exceptions the record of these Negro func-

<sup>18</sup>Taylor, A. A., "Negro Congressmen a Generation After," *Journal of Negro History*, VII, 187.

<sup>19</sup>*Op. cit.*, 1774-1927, p. 1246.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

tionaries was honorable.<sup>20</sup> Corrupt government was not always the work of the Negro, for "local, State, and Federal administrative offices which offered the most frequent opportunity for corruption, were seldom held by Negroes, but rather by the local white men, and by those from the North, who had come South to seek their fortunes."<sup>21</sup> Such service, the Negro rendered in spite of the fact that this was not the rule in that day."

### CONTESTED SEATS

The road to Congress was not always a smooth one. Several of the Congressional aspirants won their seats by contests, while a few failed of election.

Turner<sup>22</sup> of Alabama was elected to the Forty-second Congress, and was defeated for the Forty-third.<sup>23</sup> Lynch was elected to the Forty-fifth Congress, but was counted out. Nash was elected to the Forty-fourth Congress, but defeated for the Forty-fifth.<sup>24</sup> Haralson,<sup>25</sup> unsuccessful candidate in 1868, was elected to the Forty-fourth Congress, but failed of re-election to the Forty-fifth.

These contests varied in nature and scope. The

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<sup>20</sup>Taylor, A. A., "Negro Congressmen a Generation After," *Journal of Negro History*, VII, 138.

<sup>21</sup>Woodson, C. G., *Negro in Our History*, p. 407.

<sup>22</sup>*Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, p. 1631.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1631.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*; p. 1631.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1058.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

contests of John R. Lynch vs. General James R. Chalmers of Mississippi, and General Robert Small vs. Tillman in the Forty-seventh Congress, and Langston vs. Venable in the Fifty-first Congress, might be mentioned.

It should be borne in mind that for some time during which these contests were involved, Federal supervision of elections was maintained throughout the South in order to insure fair elections to the freedmen and others.

In the notice of contest for his seat in the lower House sent to General James Chalmers, Lynch made the following assertions:<sup>26</sup>

"There was a systematic plan adopted in Adams County, at the City of Natchez, at the Court House, and at Jefferson Hotel, and carried out by the officers of election and other persons, to hinder, delay and obstruct large numbers of duly qualified Republican voters at each of the voting places above named, by propounding, or allowing to be propounded to them and to other persons, silly, frivolous, and unauthorized and needless questions for the purpose of consuming the time allowed by law for polling and receiving the ballots, and thereby preventing my friends and supporters from supporting me."

<sup>26</sup>"Election held in Jefferson Hotel precinct a complete farce from beginning to end," *Miscellaneous House of Representatives Document*, No. 12, 47th Congress, p. 228.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Chalmers, his opponent, on the other hand, contended that Lynch was unpopular with his own party for many reasons, and especially because he opposed the nomination of General Grant, and that a large number of leading colored Republicans supported him (Chalmers) on the stump and at the polls.<sup>27</sup>

The contest of Small vs. Tillman of South Carolina, though similar to the Lynch vs. Chalmers contest, involved many intimidations, and shedding of blood, especially in Edgefield County.<sup>28</sup> It was stated that a colored man had been killed in the shooting, and about seven or eight hundred men were frightened away from the polls. Small charged that ballots cast in many instances for him were destroyed and others substituted with names of Tillman instead.<sup>29</sup> In his counter charges, Tillman contended that the Republicans, too, resorted to violence, in that they had killed a colored man because he wore a red shirt, and was a Democrat, and that the Republicans were responsible for the death of a white Democrat in Lawtonville precinct.<sup>30</sup>

Both Lynch and Small, the Negro contestants,

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<sup>27</sup> *Miscellaneous House of Representatives Document*, No. 12, 47th Congress, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 19 and 20, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

were seated as a result of these contests during the Forty-seventh Congress.

Later, in the Fifty-first Congress, an unusual contest<sup>21</sup> that arose was that of Langston vs. Venable of the Fourth District of Virginia. The State Board of Canvassers conceded the election of Venable, the Democratic candidate, on the 26th day of November, 1888. In September, 1888, there were two separate and distinct Conventions held in the town of Farmville, Va. Each Convention put forward its nominee for Congress from the Fourth Congressional District. One of these Conventions was called and organized under the auspices and by authority of the regular Republican Organization of the district, and the State nominated Judge R. W. Arnold of the County of Sussex.

Some of the charges were, that Langston<sup>22</sup> spent too much money to debauch the colored voters of the district, and that Perry Carson and Frederick Douglas did not favor Langston's candidacy. Venable contended that Langston was not a taxpayer in the State of Virginia, that he had never been a payer of poll or capitation tax, though the law required it. The Negro candidate admitted spending \$15,000 during his campaign.

<sup>21</sup>*U. S. Contested Election Case, Langston vs. Venable—51st Congress, 1453.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

As Mr. Venable, the Democrat, was given the certificate of election by the Virginia officials for the Congressional seat, Langston made the contest. The Committee on Privileges and Elections voted in favor of John M. Langston. When the time set for action on the case arrived, the whole Democratic membership<sup>33</sup> withdrew from the House thinking they would catch the Republicans without a quorum, the Republican majority being rather small. The Republicans immediately discovered what the Democrats were doing and had all their members rounded up. They not only seated Langston, but the Chairman of the Elections Committee took advantage of the absence of the Democrats and called up the case of Miller vs. Elliott from South Carolina, and then seated Miller, another Negro contestant, though the case was not slated for that time.

George W. Murray was elected to the Forty-fourth Congress, but secured his seat only after a successful contest with a leading Democrat of his State. It seems moreover that Menard of Florida, Lee, and other Congressional candidates, though unable to prove their contentions, were nevertheless contestants with good title.

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<sup>33</sup>This statement accords with Langston's record. See "Contest," Langston, J. M., *From Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol*, pp. 474-503.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

### AMNESTY

Jefferson F. Long of Georgia spoke in the Forty-first Congress with reference to the measures proposing to grant amnesty to the former Confederates. In this speech, Long put forth a forceful protest.<sup>24</sup> He claimed that any modification of the oath as then administered, having the purpose to bring about a general removal of political disabilities, would affect the subjugation of the loyal men of the South to the disloyal.

Rainey, speaking in the Forty-second Congress, with reference to the enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment, felt<sup>25</sup> that too much amnesty had led to the murderous activities of the disloyal. While Robert C. Delarge, another member of the Forty-second Congress, speaking on the bill for the removal of political disabilities, made it quite clear that he would not support that bill unless the gentleman for it would support a measure to protect the loyal people of the South.

Notable among the speeches on the question of amnesty, was that made by Elliott, protesting against a bill to this effect by Beck of Kentucky. He contended<sup>26</sup> that the men seeking relief were responsible for the crimes perpetrated against the loyal men of the South, and moreover maintained

<sup>24</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 42nd Congress, 1st Session, p. 102-103.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

that the passage of the bill would be nothing less than the paying of a premium on disloyalty and treason at the expense of those who had remained loyal. Pointing out the cause of their disfranchisement, Elliott demanded in the name of the law-abiding people of his constituency, Whites as well as Negroes, the rejection of this bill, and the protection of those whose only offense was their adherence to the principles of freedom and justice.

"That the proposed bill was defeated was perhaps in some measure due to his masterful arraignment of its purposes."<sup>37</sup>

Another problem of vital importance during this period, and one that demanded the energy and efforts of Negro Congressmen to a greater extent than any other from 1870 to 1901, was that of securing Civil Rights for the freedmen, or of protecting them in the exercise of such rights demanded.

In the Forty-second Congress, Elliott presented a resolution directing the Judiciary Committee to report a Civil Rights Bill.<sup>38</sup> In the Forty-third Congress, he made one of the greatest speeches of his career. Arising to defend the Civil Rights Bill, he proceeded to refute the proposition advanced by Beck of Kentucky, and supported by

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<sup>37</sup> Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

Stephens of Georgia. He held that Congress had no power to legislate against a plain discrimination made by State laws or customs against any person or class of persons within its limits. In refuting the gentlemen from Kentucky and Georgia, Elliott endeavored to show the difference between the issues involved in the Slaughter House Cases, and those at hand. He held that:

"Not only does the decision in the Slaughter House Cases contain nothing which suggests a doubt of the power of Congress to pass the pending bill, but it contains an express recognition and affirmance of such power."

Congress is here said to have power to enforce the Constitutional Guarantee (against inequality and discrimination) by appropriate legislation.

"The passage of the bill will determine the civil status not only of the Negro, but of other classes of citizens who may feel discriminated against. It will form the capstone of the Temple of Liberty begun on this continent under discouraging circumstances."\*

While speaking concerning this question of Civil Rights, Mr. Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts referred to the exhaustive presentation of Elliott concerning the law involved, and rated

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\**Congressional Record*, Forty-third Congress, 1st Session, p. 410.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

him as the peer of any man on the floor of the House at that time.<sup>40</sup>

In the Forty-eighth and Forty-ninth Congresses, James E. O'Hara, a Representative from North Carolina, evinced much interest in the protection of the Negro in the exercise of Civil Rights.<sup>41</sup> During his remarks on the bill to regulate interstate commerce, he offered an amendment to the effect that any person or persons having purchased a ticket to be conveyed from one State to another, or paid the required fare, should receive the same treatment, and be offered equal facilities and accommodations, as are furnished all other persons holding tickets of the same class without discrimination. In support of this amendment O'Hara asserted the constitutional right of Congress to regulate commerce between the States. However, he denied that this was class or race legislation. The amendment was passed.

In the Fifty-first Congress, the question of protecting the Civil Rights of Negroes became again a subject of great importance to Thomas E. Mil-

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<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 455.

Mr. Butler: I should have considered more at length, the Constitutional argument, were it not for the exhaustive presentation by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr Elliott) of the law, and the only law quoted against us in this case, that has been cited to-wit, the Slaughter House Cases. He (Elliott) with the true instinct of freedom, with a grasp of mind that shows him to be the peer of any man on this floor, be he who he may, has given the full strength and full power of that decision of the Supreme Court.

<sup>41</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

ler, a Representative from South Carolina. He remarked concerning affairs in the South, which were of vital concern to Negroes:

"Gentlemen, we want office, but the first and dearest rights the Negro of the South wants, are the right to pay for his labor, his right of trial by jury, the right to his home, his right to know that the men who lynch him will not the next day be elected to high offices, and sent abroad in the land as grand representatives of the toiling and deserving people."<sup>42</sup>

Again in the Fifty-fifth and Fifty-sixth Congresses, George H. White,<sup>43</sup> the lone Negro Congressman, devoted his entire time to protests against discrimination, appeals and opposition to lynching, and for just treatment. He emphasized lynching as an offense. White contended that if the Nation expected to avoid the State of anarchy and moral decay to which conditions were then leading, there remained no other alternative save the enactment by some future Congress of a law to constitute lynching a Federal offense, a question of vital concern up to, and since the introduction of the Dyer Anti-Lynch Bill, in 1921.

The question of Civil Rights became the general theme of remarks<sup>44</sup> by Alonzo J. Ransier, an-

<sup>42</sup>*Congressional Record*, 51st Congress, 2nd Session, p. 1215.

<sup>43</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

other Representative from South Carolina, in the Forty-third Congress. In refutation of his opponent's view that the masses of Negroes did not want Civil Rights, he sought to show by the presentation of data in form of resolutions from Negro bodies and conventions, the intense desire of the race for Civil Rights. He further mentioned his intention to offer an amendment to the Civil Rights Bill to prevent the disqualification of competent citizens for service as jurors in any court in the Nation because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

In a similar manner, James T. Rapier,<sup>45</sup> a Representative from Alabama in the Forty-third Congress, in a speech on the measure supplementary to the Civil Rights Bill, pointed out the anomalous position occupied by the Negroes in the United States. Rapier deplored the whole situation and challenged the truth of the statement that "America is the asylum for the oppressed," and held that Negroes were accorded Political Rights without the Civil. In opposition to H. H. Stevens of Georgia, Rapier claimed that the problem was national in scope, and asserted the constitutional authority of Congress to solve it. Although Stevens<sup>46</sup> offered

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146. See also Ransier, A. J., "Speech on Civil Rights," U. S. Government Printing Office, 1874.

<sup>46</sup>Stevens claimed that it is the prerogative of the states to confer civil rights upon the Negro, and contended that such action should be left to the states, *Ibid.*, p. 146.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

no constitutional objection to the bestowal of Civil Rights upon the Negro, he advanced a principle, the acceptance of which would forever preclude his enjoying them.

The position and outcome of the Civil Rights Bill brought forth the ardent defense of Richard H. Cain, a Representative from South Carolina, to the Forty-third and Forty-fifth Congresses. In opposition to Vance of North Carolina, he deemed that the Civil Rights Bill if passed would be without the limits of the Constitution, or that it would enforce "social equality, maintaining that the regulation of that condition was without the province of legislation. He did not believe that the passage of the bill would alienate from the Negroes the white men of the South, who were then friendly to them. Cain expressed the importance of giving to him (the Negro) in every State the best possible school facilities, asserted the right of the Negro by statutory enactment to his full civil liberties. In keeping with these views Cain introduced in Congress a bill supplementary to the Civil Rights Acts.

## NEGRO LEGISLATION

The Negro legislators occupied a peculiar position in Congress. His purposes were:

"To urge the protection of the Negro in his



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

exercise of the rights and privileges granted by the Constitution, to secure the enactment of laws with the purpose to secure to him a greater measure of opportunity for social advancement, to oppose the enactment of laws proposing to retard such progress, to stimulate a healthy public opinion favorable to the Negro's cause, to protest against every injustice, great or small, meted out to him, became as never before, the imperative duties of the Negro members of Congress."<sup>47</sup>

The legislation proposed and discussed by the Negro Congressmen concerned not only the removal of the political disabilities of former secessionists, the abrogation of undesirable laws or privileges in the investigation of the political methods used in certain States, but also the direction of attention to conditions which merited legislative enactment—such as granting Civil Rights to the Negro, protection of economic interests, State and local improvements, appropriations for the construction of public buildings, the promotion of public works and racial welfare, and also national aid for the educational development of Black and White.

### TERMS IN CONGRESS

The Negroes had political equality in the south-

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<sup>47</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 141.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

ern States only a few years, and with some exceptions their terms in Congress were very short.<sup>48</sup> Langston from Virginia, served in the House one term. From North Carolina there were sent to the House of Representatives, John A. Hyman, for one term, and James E. O'Hara, H. P. Cheatham and George H. White for two terms each. Jefferson F. Long represented a district of Georgia, a part of the term. Josiah T. Walls of Florida served in the House two terms. Alabama elected to Congress Jere Haralson, Benjamin S. Turner, and James T. Rapier, who served one term each. Louisiana sent Charles E. Nash for one term, and Mississippi sent John R. Lynch for two terms. South Carolina had the largest number of Negro Representatives in the House. Joseph H. Rainey of that Commonwealth sat in Congress five terms, Richard H. Cain, two terms, Robert B. Elliott, two terms, Robert Small, five terms, Thomas E. Miller, one term, and George W. Murray, two terms. At one time (1872), all the Representatives of South Carolina in Congress were Negroes.

### EDUCATION

Rainey, Walls, Cain, Haralson and Langston evinced much interest in Federal aid for the edu-

<sup>48</sup>Woodson, O. G., *The Negro in Our History*, 4th edition, 1924, pp. 404-405.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

cation of the masses. Rainey citing the fact that ignorance was widespread, and that the average school term in the South was four and one-half months, and favoring Federal aid to education, proceeded to show that it would obliterate sectional feelings and differences of opinion and thus foster a unity of sentiment that would be conducive to harmony, concord, and perpetual peace, thereby aiding the industries of our country and developing our vast national resources.<sup>49</sup> Walls introduced bills<sup>50</sup> in the same Congress for the purpose of making large grants of the public lands to schools. Cain, in the Forty-fifth Congress proposed a measure to establish an educational fund and to apply the proceeds of the public lands to the education of the people.

A little later Langston, formerly President of Virginia State College, introduced a measure<sup>51</sup> for the establishment of a National Industrial University for Negroes.

### ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Measures to provide superior facilities for the trade and commerce of their communities constituted in some instances the most valuable services rendered by legislators. Thus a few Negro Con-

<sup>49</sup>*Congressional Record*, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, app. 15-16.

<sup>50</sup>Langston, J. M., *op. cit.*, p. 510-513.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 51st Congress, 2nd Session, p. 1650.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

gressmen sought to satisfy their constituencies in the matter of local economic problems.

Benjamin Turner of Alabama, in the Forty-second Congress, proposed a bill to erect a public building in Selma, Ala., sought to increase the appropriations of rivers and harbors from \$50,000 to \$75,000, and made efforts to secure improvements in navigation.

J. T. Walls of Florida, was perhaps the most persistent of Negro Congressmen in his efforts to secure local improvements<sup>62</sup> for his district and State, for he introduced numerous bills to erect in his district, customhouses and other public buildings, and to improve the rivers and harbors of his State. He also introduced a bill to provide a life-saving station along the coast of Florida, and as an amendment to an appropriation bill, \$50,000 for the establishment of a Navy-yard at Pensacola.

The policy of Rapier, in the matter of local improvements,<sup>63</sup> was not unusual. He introduced a measure to erect public buildings in his district, and to make improvements in the rivers and harbors of the State, and succeeded in having enacted

<sup>62</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

Small, of South Carolina, and James E. O'Hara, of North Carolina, were among those Negro Congressmen, who were concerned in the matter of local improvements. Small endeavored to secure an appropriation for the restoration of the Buford Library which was destroyed during the war. Proposed measures to establish in his district customhouses, docks, warehouses, a weather observation station, and other public buildings.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

into law his measure to constitute Montgomery, Ala., a port of entry.

The policy<sup>64</sup> of John R. Lynch in regard to local improvements was similar to that of Rapier. Lynch not only proposed measures for the construction of public buildings and customhouses, for improvement of rivers within the State, but also for the construction of the Memphis and New Orleans Railroad.

James E. O'Hara introduced measures to erect public buildings in his district, and to improve the rivers and harbors in his State.

Another important economic question that occupied the attention of the Negro Congressmen was that of the tariff.<sup>65</sup> In the Forty-second Congress, Josiah T. Walls favored a tariff for protection as opposed to one for revenue only. While Lynch, in the Forty-seventh Congress, urged a protective tariff for cotton, lumber and sugar on the ground that the cotton producers of the South were in favor of a protective tariff, and regarding protection as a panacea for all the economic ills of the South.

In the Fifty-fifth Congress, White, referring to the Wilson Tariff Law enacted in 1893, advocated protection for industries and labor of

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>65</sup> Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 160.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

America, as opposed to the pauperism and cheap labor of foreigners."<sup>66</sup>

### FEDERAL ELECTION LAW

A few of the Negro Congressmen exerted much effort towards establishing an election law which would make secure the right of the Negro and other citizens to vote at the polls. John R. Lynch offered an amendment<sup>67</sup> to the Federal Elections Law. Thomas Miller, in the Fifty-first Congress, in referring to Federal elections, said:<sup>68</sup>

"Give us an election law—not a force law—a national law, Mr. Chairman, that will compel the people of the South to register the votes of the Negro and the white man alike, and count as they are cast, and let the wishes of the people in this American country be expressed here by duly elected representatives of their States."

While speaking of the Federal election laws, and need for adequate legislation and enforcement, Langston remarked:<sup>69</sup>

"I am speaking for white men as well as for Negroes, for white men in my State are proscribed and they are denied a free ballot."

He offered, moreover, a measure directing an

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>68</sup>*Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, p. 1216.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1481.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

inquiry relative to the instructions of the Attorney-General concerning elections.

Later, in the Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Congresses, George W. Murray of South Carolina, took a vigorous exception<sup>60</sup> to the bill to repeal all statutes relating to supervision of elections and special deputy marshals. He asserted that such actions would have the effect of promoting the election frauds of the reactionaries in the South, and that already in the States of Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina a decided minority of the voting population of each Congressional district elected regularly the Representative to Congress, and maintained that the present law should not only remain unchanged but rather be vigorously enforced.

### THE TWO NEGRO SENATORS

Hiram R. Revels<sup>61</sup> and Blanch K. Bruce<sup>62</sup> were the only two Negroes who served in the United States Senate. Both represented the State of Mississippi. Neither, however, was a native of that State. Revels,<sup>63</sup> born in Fayetteville, N. C., moved to Indiana and was educated in a Quaker Seminary in Union County, Ind., and was later instructed in Knox College. He became noted as a

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<sup>60</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>61</sup>*Biographical Directory*, American Congress, 1774-1927, p. 1454.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 750.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1454.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

lecturer in the States of Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Missouri. For some time he preached in Baltimore, taught in St. Louis, organized churches, and lectured in Mississippi. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he gave his assistance in organizing the first two Negro regiments in the State of Maryland. He later went to Mississippi, and became interested in managing Freedmen's Affairs.

Bruce,<sup>64</sup> on the other hand, was born in Farmville, Va. He studied under private tutorship and spent two years at Oberlin College, after which he, like his predecessor Revels, spent a number of years in the classroom as a teacher.

The two Negro Senators, Hiram Revels and B. K. Bruce, had served in public office before they were sent to Congress. The former Senator, Revels, had held several local offices in Vicksburg; while the latter had been Sheriff, Tax Collector, Commissioner of the Levees Board, and County Superintendent of Education in Bolivar County. Moreover, Bruce had served as Sergeant-at-Arms of the first State Senate, after the reconstruction period, and Commissioner of Elections in a County that was reputed as being the most lawless in the State.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 750.

<sup>65</sup>Houston, G. David, "A Negro Senator," *Journal of Negro History*, VII, 256.



# THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

## LEGISLATION

Even though the interests of the Senators differed somewhat, yet both of them proved to be ardent advocates of the welfare of their State and their racial group. In speaking on the Enforcement Act, Revels stated first his own position, and later that of the Republican Party in his State. He remarked:<sup>66</sup>

"I am in favor of amnesty in Mississippi. We pledge ourselves to it. The State is for it."

Moreover, Senator Revels, remarking at length on the Georgia Bill, spoke out fearlessly in the defense of his race.<sup>67</sup> He defended the Negroes against charges of antagonism and servile strife, lauded the conduct of Negro soldiers in the Civil War, and the part they played in saving the Union. He asserted that the Negroes bore toward their former masters no revengeful thoughts, no hatreds, no animosities. He recounted the iniquities of the bill then before the body, prayed the protection of those whose rights were thereby threatened, and appealed to Congress to give to the reconstructed State such direction and support as would best meet its most imperative needs.<sup>68</sup>

Senator Bruce, beginning his term of office

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<sup>66</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 143, quoting *Cong. Globe*, 41st Cong., 2nd Session, 3520.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

March 5, 1875, at the special session of the Forty-fourth Congress, received appointments<sup>69</sup> to the Committee on Manufactures and to the Committee on Education, and Labor, and later to the Committee on Pensions and the Committee on the Improvement of the Mississippi River, and its tributaries.

The regular session of the Forty-fourth Congress gave Bruce numerous opportunities for energetic efforts.<sup>70</sup> Bruce presented a petition of the Sons of Temperance of the District of Columbia, and the Territories, for the prohibition of the importation of alcoholic liquors from abroad and that total abstinence be made a condition of the civil, military and naval service. His first important opportunity for valuable service came during the discussion of the resolution to admit former Governor Pinchback as a Senator from the State of Louisiana, for the term of six years, beginning with the fourth of March, 1873. In his remarks concerning the resolution, Bruce contending that the Legislature was legal, pointed out<sup>71</sup> that the government of Louisiana had quite frequently been brought in official contact with the United States Congress—through its Legislatures of

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 243. See Revels and Bruce in, Lynch, J. R., *Facts on Reconstruction*, pp. 77-82.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 245. See Taft, George H., *Senate Election Cases*, 426-553 (1879-1885).

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

1873 and 1875 by memorials and joint resolutions addressed to the respective Houses; and through its executive, by credentials borne by Congressmen and by Senators and in no case had the legitimate authority of the Legislature been excepted to, save in the action of electing a United States Senator; and in no instance had the sufficiency of the executive's credentials been questioned in either House, except in the matter of the senatorial claimant. In this matter Bruce was supported by Senator Alcorn of Mississippi, and opposed by a Northerner, Senator Edwards of Vermont.<sup>72</sup>

The speech of Senator Bruce in behalf of the claimant, P. B. S. Pinchback, represents "an unselfish and sober appeal for justice to another member of the Negro race."<sup>73</sup> The claimant lost by one vote.

During the second session of the Forty-fourth Congress, Mr. Bruce confined his efforts<sup>74</sup> largely to the relief of the legal heirs of the Negro soldiers who had fought to preserve the Union. He therefore introduced a number of bills requesting that arrears of pensions be granted. In this way he became the benefactor of many persons who otherwise might never have received their pensions. In addition to such relief legislation, he pre-

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<sup>72</sup> Lynch, J. R., *Facts on Reconstruction*, p. 81.

<sup>73</sup> Houston, G. D., *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.



## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

sented for the second time a petition praying for a general law prohibiting liquor traffic; and, moreover, introduced a bill for certain improvements in the Mississippi River.

During the second session of the Forty-fifth Congress, Senator Bruce took an active interest<sup>76</sup> in the Chinese Exclusion Bill, registering his vote against the measure which seemed to him to be contrary to American principles. He early advocated that the Indians should cease to be dealt with as tribes and should receive consideration as individuals, subject to American law and beneficiaries of American institutions. This advocacy is now being emphasized by Secretary Wilbur, in announcing that the Indians should cease to be wards of the American Government, and should be absorbed as early as possible into American population.

It was during the Forty-sixth Congress that Senator Bruce was most active.<sup>77</sup> Senator Bruce did most constructive work in advocating the improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi River. He kept this important problem before Congress, urging not only that the interest of the people in the valley itself be taken care of, but that this river should by adequate facilities be

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<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 252.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

made the highway of interstate and foreign commerce. Toward this end, Senator Bruce offered several bills, meeting the exigencies of the time and providing for future needs. As the foresight of a majority of the members of Congress at that time was not sufficient to appreciate this statesman-like effort of Senator Bruce, his program for this important internal improvement was not carried out, although some important efforts since then to supply this need in our economic development must be considered as due in some measure to the persistence and courage of Senator Bruce.

To protect the rights of depositors of the defunct Freedman's Saving and Trust Company,<sup>77</sup> Bruce offered a resolution calling for a committee of five to take over the affairs of backing the institution. The Vice President, the Honorable William A. Wheeler, appointed Bruce Chairman of this Committee.

It appears, then, that two general types of legislation were pre-eminent in the measures promoted by the Negro Congressmen prior to 1901: the one proposing local improvements, the other seeking social justice for the Negro race. As to the former, it may be said that any Congressman who expects to become successful, and desires long tenure in office, must serve the immediate needs

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<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 253.

## EARLY NEGRO CONGRESSMEN

of his district. In this, the Negro Congressmen did not differ from the White. The Negro Congressmen, having been elected by their own people, considered themselves as spokesmen for the underprivileged group, hence the legislation for Civil Rights, their desire for opening educational opportunities to Negroes and other people of the South, their wishes for fair elections through the enactment of a national election law, and for protection by means of a Federal anti-lynch law, even though a number of these bills failed.

Two causes<sup>78</sup> for the failure of some of these bills may be mentioned briefly. First, the Negro membership in Congress was always comparatively small, and therefore unable to be a determining factor in the passage of a measure proposed by one of this particular group. Second, being the objects of suspicion of their party colleagues, they were not generally able to secure for their measures sufficient White Republican votes; and yet the failure of these measures, nevertheless, does not prove their lack of ability and statesmanship.

The Negroes<sup>79</sup> who were elected to Congress, however, were, with but few exceptions, men of

<sup>78</sup>Taylor, A. A., *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>79</sup>Washington, B. T., *Frederick Douglas*, p. 280.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

character and superior intelligence. B. K. Bruce of Mississippi, John R. Lynch, Robert Brown Elliott, A. J. Ransier and Robert Small were highly creditable representatives of a race that had just emerged from the night of slavery.

## CHAPTER II

### The Present Negro Congressman

**O**SCAR DEPRIEST<sup>1</sup> was elected to Congress in November, 1928, from the Twenty-first District of Illinois. He was born in Florence, Ala., in 1871, and in 1878 he moved with his parents to Salina, Kans., and then later to Chicago.

The new Congressman was elected on November 6, 1928, and was seated on April 15, 1930, after charges preferred against him were dropped.

#### PREPARATION

DePriest received his training in the public schools of Salina, Kans., and in the Salina Normal School, pursuing there a course in business. In Chicago he was a painter and decorator by trade, as well as being a real estate dealer.

#### PUBLIC EXPERIENCE

Unlike many of the early Negro Congressmen, DePriest has had but little legislative experience. In Chicago he served one term as Alderman, as Ward Committeeman, and as Assistant Illinois

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<sup>1</sup>*Congressional Directory*, 71st Congress, January 2, 1930, p. 22.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Commerce Commissioner. He has also been twice a delegate to the Republican National Convention. In Congress, DePriest has been assigned to the following Committees: Enrolled Bills, Indian Affairs, and Invalid Pensions.

### DEPRIEST SPEAKS

On December 18, 1929, Oscar DePriest made his initial speech on the floor of the House. It came after Hamilton Fish, Representative from New York, in speaking on the American occupation of Haiti, "had suggested a Commission of seven, two of whom should be colored Americans,"<sup>2</sup> and mentioned the name of Emmett J. Scott of Howard University. In his extended remarks, DePriest said:<sup>3</sup>

"Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, I occupy a peculiar position on this particular question. There have been so many contradictory statements on both sides of the House, it does appear to me that we should all vote to appoint this Commission.

"I appreciate the benefit of appointing a Commission to investigate conditions in Haiti that will have the utmost respect and confidence of all the people of that island, and I know of nothing that will instill more confidence in these black people

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<sup>2</sup>*Congressional Record*, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 929-930.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 931-932.

## THE PRESENT NEGRO CONGRESSMAN

down there than for them to know that they have one who can sympathize with them through bonds and ties of blood and kin, and I shall not make any special recommendation as to who the Negro on the Commission should be, but I do hope the President will see to it, in his wise judgment to get some man of outstanding ability, capable and competent, especially representing the group, that will be a credit to both America and Haiti.

"I have received hundreds of telegrams asking me to support this resolution, and to sustain the President in his desire and wish to appoint this Commission."

This Commission was appointed later, but in accordance with the desire of President Borneo, no Negroes were appointed as members, although it may be said that perhaps DePriest's efforts proved fruitful in the naming of a colored Commission to study the educational needs of Haiti.

Like one of the early Congressmen, J. M. Langston, DePriest hopes to get Negroes into West Point and into Annapolis Academy. The new Negro member of Congress has recommended<sup>4</sup> a few Negroes to West Point and Annapolis, and has explained that he will continue his appointments in keeping with his promises to his constituents in the South Side of Chicago.

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<sup>4</sup>*Norfolk Journal and Guide*, June 27, 1930; *Pittsburg Courier*, June 7, 1930.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Since being in Congress, DePriest has been in great demand as a speaker for Negro organizations. He has also had the opportunity of addressing other gatherings of note, including the House of Representatives of the State of Massachusetts. He has expressed as his utmost desire to conduct himself with credit to his district and to the Negro group of America.

Although not a college graduate, DePriest's experience has been of such a nature as to enable him to have a large grasp of the problems of his own district. His position is the first occupied by a Negro in twenty-eight years, and the first elected from the North. His singular position (in Congress) will perhaps cause other Negroes to aspire to similar positions in other parts of the United States.<sup>6</sup> That such a position may be used to focus the interest of other Congressmen upon the interests of this group was shown by the early Negro Congressmen.

### HIS POSITION AND PURPOSE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

In reference to DePriest's position in Congress, Judge Albert George, colored, formerly of the Municipal Court of Chicago, has stated that "Mr. DePriest now occupies a position which car-

<sup>6</sup> *Pittsburg Courier*, June 7 and Nov. 29, 1929; *Afro-American*, Aug. 10, 1929; *Washington Post*, Sept. 23, 1930.



## THE PRESENT NEGRO CONGRESSMAN

ries with it the hopes of fifteen million colored Americans." In keeping with this idea it seems that DePriest would assume this position and then sustain himself by emphasizing among other things the following suggestions for the improvement of colored Americans:

1. Organization;
2. Study the Federal Constitution;
3. Refuse pay as campaign workers.

DePriest suggests organization as a means of accomplishing something, citing Chicago as an example. In a speech in Boston, in 1929, he said, if Negroes were organized even in communities where they constitute just one-fifth of the population, and should vote intelligently, they could demand recognition.

After assuming the task of organization, DePriest would urge the Negro to find out what the Federal Constitution means to him. To accomplish this task, DePriest launched a campaign sending ten thousand copies of the Constitution of the United States at his own expense to all editors of Negro newspapers, ministers, educators, and fraternal organizations. In this way, DePriest sought to enlist the aid of Negro leaders throughout America in a campaign for Negro Rights.

A third suggestion to which DePriest recently

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

gave emphasis, is that of playing politics and getting one's share of the patronage. In Seattle, Wash., and in Boston he asked<sup>6</sup> Negroes to refuse pay as campaign workers, stating that "if you are paid on election day, you cannot go to a Party Council later and claim it still owes you something." Citing his own experience in Chicago, as an example, he declared: "I worked two years and spent \$15,000 of my money doing preliminary work for Bill Thompson, now our Mayor. When I started, he asked me how much I needed, and I told him, nothing—that when the pie was cut I would point out my piece. I did."

DePriest has also advised that the so-called Negro leaders should be allied more closely with the common people.

According to DePriest's own statement, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, the *Chicago World* and the *Indianapolis Recorder*, all colored journals, had criticized his speaking engagements.<sup>7</sup> But in spite of opposition, he still seeks to establish himself as a legislative leader for the Negro group in the United States.

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<sup>6</sup>*Pittsburg Courier*, Nov. 29, 1929; *Washington Post*, Sept. 23, 1929.

<sup>7</sup>*Afro-American*, Aug. 10, 1929.

## CHAPTER III

### The Negro in the National Conventions

**I**MMEDIATELY after the Civil War, the Negro began to exert such efforts as seemed necessary to take advantage of an opportunity to protect and advance the interests of his people who had just emerged from bondage. The Republican Party<sup>1</sup> emphasized equal Political and Civil Rights to all, and in a similar manner welcomed all oppressed people into its folds. Thus from 1868 up to the present time, Negroes as delegates have attended the National Conventions of the Republican Party. Since only one Negro ever sat as a delegate in the Democratic National Convention, and then as a substitute (in the 1924 Convention), the discussion in this chapter will center around the activities and position of Negroes in relation to the Republican National Convention.

Only a few Negroes were delegates to the Republican National Convention in 1868, among whom were James Harris<sup>2</sup> of North Carolina,

<sup>1</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1868), p. 115.  
<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* (1868), p. 40.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

who later spoke in several Conventions, and P. B. S. Pinchback<sup>3</sup> of Louisiana, who sat at intervals in the Conventions for a similar period.

More States were represented by the delegations to the Convention in 1872. South Carolina<sup>4</sup> sent A. J. Ransier and Robert Small, Mississippi sent B. K. Bruce and John R. Lynch, the latter of whom, as may be observed, was an ardent champion of Negro Rights in almost every Convention up to 1900.<sup>5</sup> Arkansas<sup>6</sup> sent William H. Grey; Florida sent<sup>7</sup> William H. Gleason and Josiah T. Walls; while in later Conventions, James T. Rapier and Ben P. Turner of Alabama;<sup>8</sup> M. W. Gibbs of Arkansas;<sup>9</sup> C. M. Wilder and E. H. Deas of South Carolina;<sup>10</sup> John C. Dancy, H. P. Cheatham, James E. O'Hara and George C. Scurlock of North Carolina;<sup>11</sup> J. C. Napier<sup>12</sup> of Tennessee, C. H. Payne of West Virginia, John M. Langston<sup>13</sup> of Virginia; Judson Lyons<sup>14</sup> and John Long<sup>15</sup> of Florida; Walter Cohen and S. W.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* (1868), p. 37; (1884), p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* (1872), p. 201.

<sup>5</sup>Note speeches of John R. Lynch in this chapter.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.* (1872), p. 184.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* (1872), p. 186.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), p. 62. Deas was also a delegate in 1892. *Ibid.* (1892), p. 109; (1900), p. 76; and (1904), *preface*.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* (1892), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), p. 64.

<sup>13</sup>*Langston and Payne* (1888), see pp. 89-105.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* (1896), pp. 104-105; (1900), p. 108; *Nat. Com.* (1904), *preface*.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* (1892), p. 115; (1896), p. 104; (1900), p. 108.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Green of Louisiana,<sup>16</sup> and N. W. Cuney<sup>17</sup> of Texas represent some of the most prominent delegates attending the Conventions prior to 1900. Of this number, Walter Cohen, apparently, has been a prominent delegate from Louisiana to the Republican National Conventions since 1896.

It seems that since 1916, a few Negro delegates have been coming from the North. Thus in the Convention of 1916, the Second District of New Jersey was represented by W. F. Cozart<sup>18</sup> of Atlantic City; in 1924 by Dr. George E. Cannon,<sup>19</sup> delegate-at-large from Jersey City; in 1928 by Dr. Walter A. Alexander,<sup>20</sup> delegate-at-large from Orange, N. J., in the delegation with Walter E. Edge. In 1920, Illinois sent from the First District Oscar DePriest,<sup>21</sup> in 1924<sup>22</sup> Louis B. Anderson with DePriest and Robert Jackson as alternates, and in 1928 returned DePriest along with Dan Jackson.<sup>23</sup> The Twenty-first District of Ohio was represented in 1928 by Leroy N. Bundy,<sup>24</sup> prominent Alderman of Cleveland.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.* (1896), p. 66.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), p. 65.

<sup>18</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1916), p. 54.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.* (1924), p. 69.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* (1928), p. 84.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.* (1920), p. 48.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.* (1924), p. 58.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* (1928), p. 78.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* (1928), p. 88.

# THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

## CONTESTS

For many years contests in the Republican National Convention have centered around such States as Alabama and Louisiana. For illustration, three contests in Alabama will be discussed along with contests involving Louisiana and a few other southern States. The two contests in Alabama prior to 1900 and the Texas contest in 1896, illustrate efforts characteristic of that time. The third Alabama contest is to be identified with the movements of that period. A number of these contests are interesting and important in that they show the struggle of Negro leaders and delegates to hold their own in the South, amidst growing sentiment in opposition to Negro leadership.

In the Convention of 1876, the seats of the delegation from Alabama, headed by Jere Haralson, were contested.<sup>25</sup> The report of the majority Committee on Credentials favored the seating of the Haralson delegates. Mr. Dezendorf of Virginia, relating the case said, that the Republican Party in Alabama had become demoralized. A conference was held, participated in by a large number of the old Convention, or Committee. In order that all the districts in Alabama might be represented, this conference enlarged the State Central Committee from twelve to twenty-four,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* (1876), pp. 40-54.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

which was assented to by at least a majority of the old Committee. In the absence of the Chairman of the State Central Committee, who was Clerk of a Committee in Washington, D. C., and absent from the State a large portion of the time, Mr. Mayer, who was made Temporary Chairman, was elected. A majority of that Committee—eighteen—called a Convention which elected the delegation headed by Jere Haralson, member of Congress. Mr. Milliken of the Committee remarked that by overwhelming testimony the people of Alabama were unanimously in favor of the Haralson delegation.<sup>26</sup> After a roll call by States, the vote resulted in 375 to 354, favoring the majority report of seating the Haralson delegates.<sup>27</sup>

In the Convention of 1880, it appeared that the contest involving the seating of James T. Rapier of Alabama was based upon whether he would support the regular nominee for President.

The facts as to the Rapier contest show that after the transaction of the preliminary business of the Republican State Convention of Alabama, a recess of the Convention was taken to allow the delegates for the several districts to retire and in the language in the resolution directing the same to report to the Convention the names of persons

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* (1876), p. 51.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.* (1876), p. 51.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

selected to be recommended to the Convention as delegates.

The Committee on Credentials had already recommended Rapier as delegate for said Fourth District. The facts show further that a State Convention was held in Selma, Ala., May 2, 1880, to elect delegates to the National Convention. This State Convention subdivided itself into District Conventions, and the Fourth Congressional District elected James T. Rapier. Even though the practice at that time was said to be almost universal in permitting District Conventions during State Conventions, yet the report of the Majority Committee on Credentials promised to omit the contest providing Rapier would agree to abide by the instruction of the State Convention, whereby all the delegates from Alabama to the National Convention were directed to unite in casting the whole vote of the State for General Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>28</sup> Rapier agreed and was seated; and Grant, the Party's nominee for President in 1868 and 1872, did not make a successful rally in that Convention.

An important contest that arose in the Convention of 1896 involved N. W. Cuney, an eminent colored member of the National Committee from the State of Texas. J. Franklin Fort of New Jer-

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<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* (1880), p. 46.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

sey, then Chairman of the Committee on Credentials, opposed the Cuney delegation, and recommended the seating of the Grant delegation<sup>29</sup> from Texas. Mr. Hepburn of Iowa, representing the Minority Committee, and sustaining the Cuney delegates-at-large, presented the following report:

"The National Committee did not attempt to consider the merits of the cases presented by any of the one hundred and sixty-odd contestants; only the regularity of the credentials being passed upon by the National Committee. . . . Not one word of the testimony adduced was read before your Committee. Affidavits were filed there by the score, but no man knows what they contain save as their contents are stated by the gentlemen making the argument on the one side, or the other. Your Committee on Credentials persistently voted down propositions specifically to investigate cases from Texas, other than those from the State at large."

In refuting the contention of Mr. Hepburn, J. Franklin Fort remarked<sup>30</sup> in part:

"Texas held a State Convention to elect delegates-at-large. Mr. Cuney was elected Temporary Chairman fairly and legally. The temporary or-

<sup>29</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1896), p. 48.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* (1896), pp. 52-53, 55.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

ganization was made permanent under protest and without a roll call. And from the time Cuney took the Chair until he declared the Convention adjourned, he refused to grant a roll call, no matter who demanded, when or where. A resolution was offered to elect four delegates-at-large, Cuney at the head, and that was declared carried, or rather, put through by a *viva voce* vote, with another man that Cuney put in the Chair to do the business. And yet no roll call."

Mr. Fort held that Cuney bolted the Convention, held one of his own, and elected his State delegation-at-large from Texas. After many heated arguments on both sides of the contest, the colored Committeeman from Texas was refused a seat in that Convention.

### LILY WHITE MOVEMENT

A number of the contests involved the "Lily White" Movement. The Alabama State contest for seats as delegates-at-large to the Republican National Convention of 1908, was the result of a fight between two organizations, the Davidson and Thompson delegations. Both claimed to be the regular and legal Republican Organizations of the State, and one of them represented the "Lily White" Movement. Davidson, the leader of the former delegation, held that the State Committee,

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

composed largely of Federal office holders, ceased to exist because of the expiration of the two years from the date of their original selection. Moreover, he sent out a call from Birmingham to convene a State meeting on September 11, 1906. This organization elected its officers and held a Convention two years later under the direction of Julius Davidson, the leader and Chairman of the "Lily White" Convention of 1902."

The Thompson delegation, composed of Nathan Alexander, colored, J. O. Thompson, William R. Fairlee and Frank N. Lathrop, contended that they represented the regular Republican emblem, a vulcan adopted and filed with the Secretary of State before the Davidson organization was in existence. According to the minutes of the meeting of the State Committee, a State Convention, called at Birmingham on May 5 and 6, 1908, by the Chairman of the State Committee, J. O. Thompson, elected the Thompson delegation. The Thompson faction (a Taft delegation) was recognized by the Convention."

Quite a few of the contests involving colored delegates that were waged in the Republican National Convention in 1912, somewhat like the Ala-

<sup>11</sup>National Committee, *The Truth About Those Delegates, The Alabama Contest* (1908), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>*Official Proceedings of the National Republican Convention* (1908), p. 32.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

bama contest of 1908, manifested earmarks of the "Lily White" Movement, and to an extent the rotten borough politics. Up to that time, contests were brought to the National Convention, involving the delegates-at-large and most of the district delegates from the State of Louisiana,<sup>33</sup> at every Convention since 1876, except the Convention of 1884. During all of this time there were two wings of the Republican Party in the State. In the National Convention of 1908, both delegations from Louisiana were seated with a half-vote each, under a resolution that "a committee to be composed of the Chairman, Secretary and one member of the incoming National Committee, be empowered to formulate a plan for the thorough reorganization of the party throughout the State of Louisiana."

In February, 1912, this Sub-Committee of the National Committee consisting of Mr. Ralph Williams of Oregon, representing the Chairman, William Hayward, the Secretary, and E. C. Duncan of North Carolina, went to Louisiana and made a thorough investigation, interviewing all the Party leaders who could possibly be reached, regardless of faction or color. Before proceeding with the deliberations, an agreement was signed whereby ten men, five duly authorized from both

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<sup>33</sup> National Committee (1912), *op. cit.*



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

factions, agreed to submit to Messrs. Duncan, Williams and Hayward of the National Committee, all questions of contest between the two factions, also to decide what questions of contest should be properly decided, and thus pledged themselves to be bound by the award rendered by the National Committee, above named.

The Sub-Committee of the National Committee, after hearing all the evidence, found that the action of the State Committee, a few days previous, was illegal, in that it refused to seat eleven duly-elected members of the State Committee, and that the election of officers of the Committee and the call for a State Convention, in the absence of these legally elected members, were illegal and must be annulled, and ordered the State Committee to meet not later than March 8, 1912. Frank B. Williams was originally elected Chairman of the State Central Committee. Emil Kuntz was leader of the faction refused recognition by Williams in his Committee. Williams refused to abide by the decision of the Sub-Committee of the National Committee because of his pronounced "Lily White" views, and because nearly all the Republicans ordered by the Sub-Committee to be recognized as members of the State Central Committee were colored men. The decision of the Sub-Committee was also repudiated by Mr. Pearl Wight,

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

member of the National Committee, and two others, all members of the Williams faction, who claimed that they signed the agreement mentioned under duress.

The new State Committee met March 8, in accordance with the direction of the Sub-Committee, with Victor Loissel, Chairman, and called a State Convention to meet in Alexandria, April 6. This State Convention was duly held in accordance with the call; and was a large representative gathering of Republicans, with delegates present from every parish in the State, except three, and elected a delegation headed by E. H. Hebert, to the National Convention which was instructed for Taft.

The Williams-Wight faction proceeded to hold the Convention originally called, the call for which had been annulled by the Sub-Committee. This Convention split into two bodies, both of which named delegates to the National Convention. In both of the bodies the names of the majority of delegates present appeared on the registration lists as Democrats in politics.

The National Committee, by a vote of 50 to 2, refused to sustain the contest against the Taft delegation headed by Hebert. The Taft delegates from all districts were retained in their seats in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Congressional Districts by *viva voce* vote.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The First District was represented by two colored men, Walter Cohen and J. Madison Vance, of New Orleans. Of these contestants, none were appealed to the Committee on Credentials except those from the Fourth and Fifth Districts; and the Taft delegates from these Districts were retained in their seats for the same reason that caused the defeat of the contestants against the Taft delegates from the State at large.<sup>24</sup> Only one of two Districts mentioned, the Fifth, was represented by a Negro, F. H. Cook, who was duly elected along with C. D. Insley. The Sixth District, just as the Fourth and Fifth, abandoned the contests and E. W. Sorrell and B. V. Baranco, both colored, were retained in their seats.<sup>25</sup>

The Texas contest in the National Convention in 1912, somewhat like the one in Louisiana, centered around the "Lily White" issue.<sup>26</sup> This contest involved the rotten borough system, the eight delegates-at-large from the State, two of whom were Negroes—W. H. Love of McKinney and William MacDonald of Fort Worth, Texas. A brief history of the situation shows that in 1896, shortly after Colonel Lyons took charge, the Republican Party cast 167,000 votes in the State; in

<sup>24</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1912), pp. 232, 274-275. Also, National Committee, *The Truth About Those Delegates*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1912), pp. 274-275.

<sup>26</sup> National Committee (1912), *op. cit.*, pp. 43-45.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

1900 the Republican Party vote was 121,000; in 1904, Roosevelt received 51,000; in 1908, Taft got 65,000; and in 1910, the Republican candidate for Governor, nominated at a small machine Convention, received only 26,000 Republican votes, a decrease of 141,000 in sixteen years. This came about at a time when the financial and business growth of the State, largely due to the influx of northern men and capital, was marvelous, and when the chief port of Texas was the second in the United States.

The Lyons machine was made up largely of Postmasters and other Federal officials, whose relationship to the Republican Party existed entirely for selfish purposes. Affidavits were produced, signed by many County Clerks, showing that there was no Republican County Organization in existence at the time Colonel Lyons claimed that delegates from those Counties were chosen for the State Convention. It was the custom to send blank credentials to some of the Counties and these credentials, after being signed by two Republicans, as Chairman and Secretary, without holding a Primary election, or a County Convention, were then returned to the State machine. Throwing out "these rotten boroughs," Taft controlled the State Convention by a large majority. The State Executive Committee, which

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

was controlled by Cecil Lyons because of the proxies which he had procured, refused to exhibit any credentials or permit the inspection of the temporary roll of delegates to the State Convention.

There was also a postal card exhibited which had been circulated throughout the entire State on which Cecil Lyons, over his signature, raised the "Lily White" issue and stated that the time had come when the voters were to decide whether the Negro or the White man was to rule in the State of Texas.

The National Committee decided that the Taft delegates represented the real Republican sentiment of the State of Texas. These Taft delegates, who placed in proof the regularity of their election in accordance with the National call of the Committee and who endeavored by their Convention to reflect and give effect to public sentiment in the State, were declared the duly and regularly elected delegates to the National Convention.\*

Other contests in which colored men were concerned for seats in the Republican National Convention of 1912, involved the States of Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee and the District of Columbia.

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\* *Republican National Convention (1912)*, pp. 282-283.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Most of these contests were abandoned.<sup>36</sup> In every State mentioned, the colored delegates against whom contests were made were seated as Taft delegates. J. A. Jones of the Fifth District of Arkansas; W. W. Phillips of the Fourth District, and Perry W. Howard of the Eighth District of Mississippi; Joseph E. Lee and W. A. Watts, at large, and W. H. Lucas of the Second District, and M. Paige of the Third District of Florida; William James of the First, S. S. Broadmax of the Second, J. C. Styles of the Third, R. B. Butts of the Fourth, W. E. Penn of the Fifth, R. A. Holland of the Sixth, Louis H. Crawford of the Seventh, M. B. Morton of the Eighth, Charles T. Walker of the Tenth, A. N. Fluker of the Eleventh, and S. S. Mincey of the Twelfth Districts of Georgia; J. E. Wood, at large from Kentucky; R. R. Church of the Tenth District of Tennessee; and Calvin Chase of Washington, D. C., were the colored delegates whose contests resulted in seating them as Taft delegates.

The National Committee sustained the regularly elected Taft delegates from the Tenth Congressional District of Tennessee. The contestants who originally claimed they were for Taft, but subsequently announced themselves in favor of Roosevelt, failed to present their case before the

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<sup>36</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1912), pp. 266-286.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Committee on Credentials, and it was decided against them by default.<sup>39</sup> As a result, Robert Church, prominent political leader of that State, was seated.

According to the National Committee, in the District of Columbia contest involving Aaron Bradshaw and Calvin Chase, the latter a prominent Negro editor, there were no evidences given to substantiate the charges of fraud and irregularity<sup>40</sup> in election returns which had been made.

The contests of 1916 involved prominent Negroes of Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee. A contest was submitted against the entire Georgia delegation, ten of whom were Negroes. The Committee on Credentials, however, recommended the delegation, and they were placed on the permanent roll.<sup>41</sup> Phil H. Brown, the only Negro delegate-at-large from the State of Kentucky, received one-half vote along with seven white delegates-at-large.<sup>42</sup> In Mississippi, the contest between two colored delegates, D. W. Sherrod and E. E. Howard, for seats from the Fifth District, resulted in both being seated with a one-half vote each.<sup>43</sup> While in Louisiana, the two Negro delegates-at-large, along with six

<sup>39</sup>The National Committee (1912), *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>41</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1916), pp. 39-40.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

white delegates-at-large, were permitted one-half vote each."<sup>44</sup> Armand Romain, a white leader, controlled six of the twelve votes permitted to the State of Louisiana; and Walter Cohen, colored, controlled the other six."<sup>45</sup> As a result of the contest, Robert Church and seven white delegates-at-large from Tennessee received only one-half vote each in the Convention.

Because of disfranchisement, the organization of the Republican Party in the South is not based upon votes; everything apparently depends upon possession of the Party machinery. Up until 1912, this Party machinery<sup>46</sup> was generally in the hands of colored men, but white people, North and South, politely advised the best Negroes to get out of politics, leaving matters, in part, in the hands of the worst element of the Negro race, as "a few self-respecting Negroes" absolutely refused to give up, and most of them followed this advice. The next move was the organization of a "Lily White" Committee or Convention and declaring themselves the Republican Party. Fear of the voting power of the northern Negro, however, kept the National Republican Committee or Convention from recognizing this vote movement in most States, although the "Lily Whites" gained

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>46</sup> "Political Conventions," *The Crisis* (1920), p. 175.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

practical control in Texas, Arkansas, and several other States. The next step was to enlist and make sure of having Negro support by getting certain complacent Negroes to support them. This is illustrated in Mississippi. *The Crisis* of August, 1920, referring to the political Conventions, continues:

"Two years ago the National Committeeman for Mississippi died. The Republican State Convention elected Perry Howard, a reputable colored lawyer. The National Republican Committee, meeting at St. Louis," refused to seat Howard in the face of his clear right, and based their contention on the fact that certain colored men, Isaiah T. Montgomery and Eugene Booze, testified for the white opponent Mulvihill. Mulvihill was seated. In this way he got control of the Party machinery, and thus Mississippi came under the control of the Whites."

The same thing was attempted in Georgia in 1912.<sup>47</sup> A white man was made National Committeeman, succeeding a colored man, Judson Lyons. It is reported that this white man was afterwards driven out of Georgia under an indictment, but he selected another white man, Roscoe Pickett, as his successor. The colored man thought that his

<sup>47</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1918-1919), p. 61.

<sup>48</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1920), p. 86; *The Crisis* (1920), pp. 20, 175.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

successor should be a colored man, so every effort was put forth to keep control of the Party machinery. The colored men were able to enlist the help of well-educated Negroes, and the effort of the white partisans to lock them out of the hall was frustrated.

The National Committee, despite its wish, had to seat a majority of colored delegates, who were determined to elect a colored Committeeman. They felt that the Credentials Committee would overturn their action when the name of their candidate, Henry Lincoln Johnson, was submitted<sup>49</sup> for election by the Convention. Mr. Cole of Georgia said that the majority of the delegation from Georgia agreed not to nominate a man for the National Committee until after the Presidential nomination.<sup>50</sup> The Permanent Chairman, Mr. Lodge, asked the Secretary of the Convention for a roll call of the Georgia delegation, and then announced to the Convention the election of Henry Lincoln Johnson as a member of the National Committee by the delegates from Georgia. A chorus of "no's" went up following the "ayes." Further cries of "no" were heard demanding a roll call. The Chairman explained that they were not entitled to a roll call on that question, because

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<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 93.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

under the rules, the action of the Convention is mandatory, but the confusion continued and the demand for a roll call was repealed. The Chairman remarked that the rules may be suspended by a two-thirds vote and then a roll call on the proposition, if the Convention desired it. There were cries of "No! No!" followed by "Let us proceed regularly." Mr. Lodge then stated that there was no further action to be taken, after the vote of the Georgia delegation had been ascertained.<sup>81</sup> Henry Lincoln Johnson became National Committeeman from Georgia.

In Florida, in 1920, the regular Organization held no election for officers according to the rules.<sup>82</sup> A group of "Lily Whites" held a Convention in a place where Negroes were not admitted, and elected officers and delegates. Thereupon a Colored Organization held a Convention and elected officers and delegates. At Chicago, the first or regular Organization was formed consisting of both white and colored delegates.

At the Shelby County, Tenn., Convention, the colored delegates were not admitted. They went to the State Convention and threatened to revolt.<sup>83</sup> The State Convention ordered that they be admitted to the Organization and also put a colored

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>82</sup>"Political Conventions," *The Crisis* (1920), p. 175.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

man on the State delegation-at-large. R. R. Church, a young man of Memphis, Tenn., was elected in the District Convention meeting of Shelby and neighboring counties, and was elected because of the overwhelming number of colored people present. The National Committee in the Convention, recognized his regularity and seated him, but the white opponents of Church telegraphed messages for various white delegations of women from cities in Tennessee, suggesting that the women would bolt the State ticket if Church was retained as a delegate. Thereupon the Credentials Committee unseated him.<sup>54</sup> A white man, Charles B. Quinn, was made delegate.<sup>55</sup> Concerning this situation, Church remarked:<sup>56</sup>

"Mr. Chairman, I have a minority report in my hand, and I know that I am entitled to a seat in the Convention as a delegate from the Tenth Congressional District of Tennessee. But I am not going to be the one man to bring any minority report before this Convention, so I have decided to withdraw it, and I am going to carry my fight back to Memphis, Tenn., and settle it there."

In Louisiana, the State Committee held their meetings in the Grunewald Hotel, where no Ne-

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>55</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1920), p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* (1920), p. 44.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

groes were allowed, even as servants.<sup>57</sup> When Walter Cohen and his colored delegation appeared they were denied admission. They, together with White friends, organized their Convention, and elected delegates. Their delegates were seated, and the Committee adopted the rule that thereafter Conventions must not be held in places ordinarily inaccessible to colored people.

In the Republican Convention of 1920, there were delegates-at-large from Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia. These delegates from Missouri and Tennessee had only one-half votes.<sup>58</sup> At the same Convention, the delegates from the Fourth District of Virginia, all white, received only one-fourth vote each.<sup>59</sup>

In Missouri, a colored alternate was seated when the White delegate confessed to receiving illegitimate campaign funds.

There were contests in the 1924 Convention involving colored men from Mississippi and Tennessee, and in the 1928 Convention, Mississippi and Georgia. In 1924, the contestants from the Fourth District of Mississippi, received one-half

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<sup>57</sup>"Political Conventions," *The Crisis* (1920), p. 175.

<sup>58</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1920), pp. 55-66.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

vote each;<sup>60</sup> while those from Tennessee, centered around seventeen delegates-at-large, each of whom received a vote of seven-seventeenths.<sup>61</sup> Among those present were Robert Church, colored, and Claudius Huston of Chattanooga. In Mississippi, W. W. Phillips, colored, of Kosciusko, was a contestant both in 1924 and 1928. In 1928, the contestants from the Fourth and Eighth Districts of Mississippi and those from Georgia received one-half vote.

The election of the members of the National Committee from Georgia, in 1928, differed slightly from that of the Henry Lincoln Johnson contest of 1920. When it was announced that the names of two Negro delegates, Benjamin J. Davis, well known editor and political leader from Atlanta, and Mrs. George S. Williams, had been sent to the Secretary of the Convention, Roscoe Pickett, White, former National Committeeman of that State, opposed the election of Davis by substituting that of Joseph H. Watson, a colored man, who has attended Conventions quite regularly since 1916. The statement of Pickett was challenged by Mr. A. T. Walden of Georgia. Thereupon Pickett failed in his endeavor to get a roll call. His motion was tabled, and the entire

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<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.* (1924), p. 66.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

matter as to the selection of the National Committeeman to represent Georgia, was referred to the Republican National Committee.<sup>62</sup>

The Negro delegates to the Republican National Convention during the period prior to 1900 and since that time gave unstinted support to candidates whose records they believed to favor the welfare of their race and other oppressed people; and in turn for their support focused the attention of the Convention upon the problem of securing Civil Rights and protection for their group.

In order to get the full support of the Negro delegates for the party nominee in the Convention of 1872, repeated calls were made by the audience for two distinguished race orators, Robert Brown Elliott of South Carolina and James Harris, one-time member of the Senate of North Carolina. The former emphasized as a basis for unity a guarantee for the equal protection of all citizens,<sup>63</sup> whether they be among the lofty or the lowly, under the laws at home, as well as our citizens abroad. The latter recommended<sup>64</sup> the adoption of a platform large enough for every loyal man to stand on; and to incorporate into it every vital principle of Sumner's Civil Rights Bill.

<sup>62</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1928), pp. 227-234.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.* (1872), pp. 139-140.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

In the Convention of 1876, William H. Grey, a prominent colored delegate of Arkansas, emphasized the fidelity of the Republican Party to the principles of Civil Liberty.<sup>66</sup> While the noted Frederick Douglass, after loud calls for a speech, in his lengthy remarks, maintained that the Negro be given assurance<sup>66</sup> of protection by the candidate placed before the country, as he goes to the ballot box to vote.

During the Conventions of 1880 and 1888, two of the most accomplished Negro delegates supported the candidacy of John Sherman, because of his evinced interest in oppressed people. Thus Robert Brown Elliott, Speaker of the House of Representatives in South Carolina in 1876 and as delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1880, said in part:<sup>67</sup>

"I support the nomination of John Sherman of Ohio, because I believe if he should be the nominee of this Convention, the rights of every citizen of the United States, without regard to their race or nationality, their station, or condition in life, will receive the fullest protection at his hands."

Later, during the Convention of 1888, John Mercer Langston, who had served for a period of four years as the President of the State College

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<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.* (1876), p. 137.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.* (1880), p. 190.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

at Petersburg, speaking<sup>68</sup> in behalf of seven millions of Negroes and all the poor white people of the South—so long denied schoolhouses, so utterly abandoned to ignorance and poverty and degradation—requested that the nomination of Sherman be made national, and the Virginia delegation would unite Wise and Mahone, and carry that old Commonwealth to victory.

In that same Convention for party harmony, James Harris of North Carolina, after supporting, with Elliott and Langston, the candidacy of Sherman, spoke for Harrison;<sup>69</sup> and John R. Lynch,<sup>70</sup> instructed by the delegation from Mississippi to second the motion to make the nomination of General Harrison unanimous, promised as a basis for unity, support for the protection of American Labor, capital and homes. Lynch also expressed the desire of his delegation for the protection of human life, the sanctity and purity of the ballot and the advocacy of a system of public education.

In the Convention of 1892, W. P. Cheatham of North Carolina,<sup>71</sup> in behalf of eight million Negro citizens, arose to second the nomination of Benjamin Harrison.

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<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.* (1888), pp. 145-146. William Mahone was the leader of the Republican Party in Virginia. Wise was the leader of a faction of the Republican Party—both white men.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.* (1888), p. 205.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.* (1888), p. 205.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.* (1892), p. 102.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

The speeches of George E. Cannon of New Jersey, representing "the millions of true Republicans" in seconding the nomination of Calvin Coolidge for President in 1924, and of John R. Hawkins in the Convention of 1928, emphasized "equal opportunity, and the privileges under the Constitution." The former maintained that millions of faithful, loyal, and patriotic citizens hoped to hasten the day "when the sun shall not shine, and the rain shall not fall on any American citizen who is denied an equal opportunity and the privileges of the basic law of the land, because of race, creed, or nativity."<sup>12</sup> While the latter, in his glowing tribute<sup>13</sup> to two races: the Anglo-Saxon pioneers in New England, and the Negro pioneers in the Southwest, saw in the nomination of Herbert Hoover for President "a willingness to sacrifice in order that the rights of every man, woman and child may be protected in the enjoyment of the full rights and privileges under the Constitution."

The remarks of some colored delegates supporting nominees in the Convention of 1876, were of an economic as well as racial importance. For instance, John R. Lynch, in his remarks favoring the elevation of Oliver P. Morton, stated that "it

<sup>12</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1924), p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* (1928), pp. 207-208.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

would not only secure the arrest and prosecution of the defrauders of the national revenue, but would strike terror to the heart of those monsters in the South who were driving away capital from that section."<sup>74</sup>

P. B. S. Pinchback, colored, formerly Governor of Louisiana, made some pertinent and extended remarks in the Convention of 1884.<sup>75</sup> He desired to strengthen the candidacy of Chester A. Arthur, for President, which was promoted by such young political leaders and independents<sup>76</sup> as Lodge and Roosevelt who were heading a movement against the nomination of Blaine. In his remarks, Pinchback mentioned the desire of the sugar planters to support Chester A. Arthur, through an independent electoral ticket in case the Democratic Party should fail to insert a protective tariff in their platform. The remarks of racial importance in Lynch's speech, stressed the guarantee by the amendment of the Constitution; whereas, Pinchback's statements branded the current rumors in the Press that the colored delegates to the Convention of 1884 were a mercantile element.<sup>77</sup> Pinchback, moreover, contended that the colored men are "as pure, as incorruptible when holding

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.* (1876), p. 290.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), pp. 119-120.

<sup>76</sup>Paxon, F. L., *Recent History of United States* (1865-1929), pp. 184-185. Houghton Mifflin Co.

<sup>77</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1884), pp. 119-120.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

offices of public trust as the whitest man in the Convention."

Since 1884, there have been a few Negro delegates who opposed the movement to reduce representation from the South. In the Convention of 1884, when the strength of the Negro delegations from the South was thrown to the Republican independents headed by Lodge and Roosevelt, efforts were made to reduce southern representation. The report of the Minority Committee on Rules and Order of Business, recommended that in the future each Congressional District be entitled to one delegate, and one additional delegate for each 10,000 votes, or major fraction thereof, cast for the Republican Presidential electoral ticket at the last preceding election. John R. Lynch spoke quite convincingly in opposition to this proposal at least in two Conventions. In the Convention of 1884, Lynch, in opposing the report of the Minority Committee on Rules and Order of Business, pointed out<sup>78</sup> that a number of delegates who came from States where elections were not "pure and free" would be materially injured; but suggested "that southern delegates would submit, provided the convention would agree to change the national law as they had a right to do under the Fourteenth Amendment—as

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<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), pp. 86-87.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

to reduce the representation in Congress, and in the electoral colleges of states that disfranchise voters as they do in the South." To adopt this amendment he urged, would be saying "we will only admit you on what the Democrats choose to give"; and cited his own situation in the contest of 1880, when the official count gave the Democratic opponent 5,000 of his votes. Consistent in his fight, Lynch again in the Convention of 1900 proposed a substitute<sup>79</sup> to the motion of Mr. Quay of Indiana that provided for a reduction of representation in Congress in any State wherein the right to vote is denied on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude or the same is abridged.

Another colored opponent to the movement to reduce representation in the Republican National Conventions from the South was J. E. O'Hara of North Carolina. O'Hara, along with his colleague, John R. Lynch, in the Convention of 1884, maintained<sup>80</sup> that a reduction in representation would simply fire their Democratic friends "with zeal to reduce the gallant band of Republicans on the floor of Congress."

The firm position of the Honorable Henry

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.* (1900), p. 100. Lynch, J. R., "Facts on Reconstruction," pp. 223, 254, 256, 257. He tells about his activities in these conventions including speeches made.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.* (1884), p. 90.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Lincoln Johnson of Georgia against the reduction movement in the Convention of 1908, was somewhat the same as that of his predecessors, Lynch and O'Hara, in previous Conventions. In his lengthy remarks, Johnson held<sup>81</sup> that the Convention should, before reducing Georgia's twenty-two district votes, reduce the number of those Congressmen; and appealed further to the Convention to pass an honest election law which would guarantee to Negroes "the right to vote in safety and in peace"; and the State of Georgia would send forth six Republican Congressmen under the law.

In spite of the Negro's protests against a reduction of delegates, some sentiment still prevailed in the Conventions in favor of a reapportionment of delegates according to votes, and in the Convention of 1912, a minority of the Committee on Rules and Order of Business<sup>82</sup> repeated precisely the recommendation of the minority of that Committee in the Convention of 1884, providing for one delegate from each Congressional District, and one additional delegate from each of said Congressional Districts for every 10,000 voters, or fraction thereof. Although both reports of the Committees were tabled in that Conven-

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* (1908), pp. 105-106.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* (1912), p. 330.

## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

tion, the call issued for the Convention<sup>83</sup> of 1916 evinced a reapportionment of delegates according to voters rather than population.<sup>84</sup> One delegate was allowed for each district, and one additional delegate for each Congressional District in which the vote for any Republican electors in 1908 or for the Republican nominee for Congress in 1914 shall have been not less than 7,500. The mandate of the Convention of 1916 repeated this reapportionment as issued by the National Committee in its call<sup>85</sup> for the Convention of 1920, and it was continued in the report<sup>86</sup> of the Committee on Rules and Order of Business in that Convention. On June 8, 1921, the Republican National Committee adopted a resolution further reducing the South's representation at National Conventions of the Party.<sup>87</sup>

Another meeting, however, on December 12, 1923, fixing the apportionment of delegates for the South on the basis of one delegate for each 2,500 Republican voters, was reversed and the old apportionment of one delegate for each Congressional District was restored with the request for an additional delegate for each 10,000 voters or more for any Republican elector in the last

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.* (1916), p. 9.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.* (1916), p. 69.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.* (1920), p. 10.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.* (1920), p. 72.

<sup>87</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), pp. 66-67,

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

preceding Presidential election, or for the Republican nominee for Congress in the last preceding Congressional election.<sup>88</sup> This additional delegate for each 10,000 voters from a district was carried over in the Conventions of 1924 and 1928.

### SOUTHERN DELEGATES

As compared with the number of delegates from the South to the National Convention of 1912, the loss in the number from this section was for the 1916 Convention, 78; for the 1920 Convention, 83; for the 1924 Convention, 69. The most notable effect was upon the number of Negro delegates from the South which decreased from 62 at the Republican National Convention of 1912 to 32 at the 1924 Convention.<sup>89</sup>

### POSITIONS OF NOTE IN THE CONVENTION

A major portion of the work of a National Convention is done by Committees. The four most important Committees appointed are: (1) Permanent Organization; (2) Credentials; (3) Rules and Order of Business; (4) Resolutions.

Prominent Negroes have served on each of these Committees quite frequently.<sup>90</sup>

Of far greater importance is the work of the

<sup>88</sup> *Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), p. 66.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>90</sup> See Lynch and Elliott, on resolutions, *Republican National Convention* (1872), p. 126; J. G. Long, Committee on rules (1876), p. 239.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Republican National Committee, a Committee coming into existence at a National Convention, and serving until the next Convention. It conducts the campaign for the election of the nominees of that Convention for President, and Vice President. Moreover, the Committee preserves the party's records, arranges the inaugural ceremonies, issues calls and makes arrangements for the physical handling of the next Convention, determines contests, makes up a temporary roll, names temporary officers—such as Temporary Chairman. With but few exceptions, Negroes of the South have been chosen by their State delegations and ratified as members of the National Committee by the Convention generally, since 1872.

Usually, at least two Negroes have been members of the National Committee in almost every Convention. Since 1924, two Negro women, Mrs. E. P. Booze and Mrs. George N. Williams, from the States of Mississippi and Georgia, have been members of the National Committee.

Perhaps the highest position held by a Negro in the Republican National Convention was that of Temporary Chairman, in 1884, which was held by John R. Lynch, head of the delegation from Mississippi. Had Lynch's delegation, and that of other southern and northern States<sup>1</sup> in 1880 not

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<sup>1</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1872, 1876, 1880), p. 639.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

yielded for party unity, B. K. Bruce, Mississippi's able Senator, might have been selected as the party nominee for Vice President; and thus a much higher position might have been held. Lynch's support of Chester A. Arthur, in the Convention of 1880, and according to Lodge, his leadership in the South, his conspicuous parliamentary ability, his courage, and his character,"<sup>92</sup> merited the selection. Lynch also became a member of the National Committee during that Convention along with P. B. S. Pinchback.<sup>93</sup> In 1892, Negroes represented the States of Texas, Mississippi, Florida, and the District of Columbia, on the National Committee. There are at present three Negro members of the Republican Committee from Georgia and Mississippi.

It may safely be said as to National Conventions, that the activities of the Negroes have been mostly in the Republican ranks, in which they have been delegates since 1868. Since 1916, a few such delegates have come from northern cities. It seems, moreover, that such States as West Virginia and Virginia, both represented by Negroes

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* (1884-1888), p. 6; Lynch, J. R., *Facts on Reconstruction*.

<sup>93</sup> *Republican National Convention* (1868-1880): William A. Gleason, Florida, 1874, p. 223; Haralson and Pinchback, 1876, *Ibid.*, p. 331; J. H. Deveaux, J. R. Lynch, 1880, and Perry Carson, 1884, p. 95; Pinchback and Carson, 1888, p. 107; N. W. Cuney, James Hill, J. G. Long, and Carson, 1892, pp. 115-116; J. G. Long, Hill, and Lyons, 1896, pp. 104-105; Lyons, 1900, *preface*; Judson Lyons, 1904, *preface*; H. L. Johnson, 1920, p. 93; Mrs. Williams and Ben Davis, Georgia; Mrs. E. P. Booze and Howard, Mississippi, 1924.



## THE NEGRO IN THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

in early Conventions, have not been represented by Negroes in recent years.

The contests prior to 1900 evince apparently the struggling efforts of veteran Negro political magnates to maintain party leadership in the South; while the contests thereafter, seemingly indicate the zeal and attempts of the so-called "Lily Whites" to eliminate the Negro as a political entity in the party Conventions.

The speeches and remarks of these delegates are but the forerunners of their civil, economic, educational and remedial legislative measures designed in Congress in order to establish and protect the Negro's political status as a citizen, as well as to improve the conditions of other citizens. Within the last three decades, few speeches have been made by the Negroes in Conventions, there being a tendency, as stated by Republican headquarters and exhibited in the Conventions of 1924 and 1928, to permit only one Negro to speak relative to nominations.

With a record of once having been elevated as a Temporary Chairman in opposition to the recommendation of the National Committee, and representing no less than four States as members of that Committee during one session, the Negro was without membership on that Committee from 1912 to 1920. Two Negroes are now represented



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

on that Committee from Mississippi, with only a Committeewoman representing the State of Georgia. As shown in the Convention of 1924, and maintained in 1928, the colored delegates have had much representation on the most important Committees during Republican National Conventions.

## CHAPTER IV

### In the National Campaigns

**B**ETWEEN 1869 and 1877, the Whites regained control of every southern State—and Whites who regarded the Negro menace as the fundamental question in politics concentrated their strength within the Democratic ranks.<sup>1</sup> The Negro, however, did not give up the struggle. To him, the ballot was the symbol of freedom; and therefore he contended in Congress, and in the Republican National Conventions for Federal supervision of elections, and other desirable remedies.

In later years, the Negro is found in a few instances participating in Congressional Campaigns of mainly the major parties.

#### THE REPUBLICAN PARTY—EQUAL RIGHTS

The problem of Equal Rights, long featured by the colored Congressmen and delegates to the Republican National Conventions during Reconstruction and after, has faced the Republican Party almost continuously in the National Campaigns up to the present.

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<sup>1</sup>Salt, E. M., *American Political Parties and Elections*, pp. 84-85.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Frederick Douglass,<sup>2</sup> a colored participant in Republican Campaigns since 1872, asked by his friends in 1888 to make the most of the tariff as the main issue, insisted that the paramount issue was the rights of men, or justice for the Negro.

In the campaign of 1900, the platform of the Republican Party in its appeal to the Negro maintained:<sup>3</sup>

"That the Nation can achieve its greatest grandeur and best preserve its sacred institutions when every man is given a chance to occupy any place in the National Government to which his attainments, his character, and his ability entitle him."

The Party also mentioned, as a corollary to these tenets, its appreciation of the superior services of the Negro troops in the Spanish-American War by providing two additional regiments.

The Republican Party in the next Presidential campaign stressed<sup>4</sup> its belief in the equality of all men without reference to race or nationality.

In 1908, the Republican Party met the charges of injustice done to the Negro, and referred to the race by name. It demanded equal justice for all

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<sup>2</sup>Washington, Booker T., *Frederick Douglass*, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup>*Republican Campaign Book* (1900), p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* (1904), p. 417.



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

men,<sup>6</sup> whatever their race; condemned all devices that had for their real aim, the Negro's disfranchisement for reason of color alone; and declared "without reservation" for the enforcement in letter and spirit of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution.

In the Presidential campaign of 1912, the Republican Party re-emphasized its position of 1908, with reference to the rights of the Negro. It advocated<sup>7</sup> the abolition of peonage in several southern States, and President Taft, conscious of our country's disregard for the Constitutional rights of the Negro, stated:

"That the Republican Party<sup>8</sup> accepted the responsibility, and each member of the Party who is conscious of what it ought to stand for is ready to continue the fight for your Constitutional rights."<sup>9</sup>

Although the rights of colored men were of grave concern in the campaign of 1916, the Republican Party apparently advocated no definite policy<sup>10</sup> for the advancement of the racial group.

Charles Evans Hughes, Republican Presiden-

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<sup>6</sup>*The Outlook*, pp. 89, 412. Compare with Democratic platform, p. 598. *Republican Campaign Book* (1908), pp. 292-308. O. F. Adams, *Republican Party and the Afro-American*, p. 4. (Pamphlet in Congressional Library.)

<sup>7</sup>*Republican Campaign Book* (1912), p. 154.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* (1912), p. 246.

<sup>9</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1912), p. 81.

<sup>10</sup>*The Oriole* (1916), 18, pp. 18-17.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

tial candidate, in his speech to 2,000 Negroes in Hadley Park, Nashville, Tenn., said:<sup>10</sup>

"I stand for the maintenance of the rights of all American citizens, regardless of race or color."

Henry Lincoln Johnson, mindful of the circular<sup>11</sup> by Cyrus Field Adams, Negro Assistant Register of the Treasury, in 1908—showing the large number of Colored appointments under Republican Presidents—came to the defense of the party. He pointed<sup>12</sup> to the efforts of the Fair Play Association, a secret organization registered in the Recorder of Deeds Office, whose purpose was to reduce Negro officials' appointments to menial service. Johnson also emphasized the failure of President Wilson to appoint Negroes to certain positions formerly held by them under Republican Administrations.

As far back as 1896, the Republican Party, accepting "that lynching constitutes an infringement upon the sacred rights of citizenship, and a blot upon the American civilization," denounced this evil in its platform.<sup>13</sup> The Republican Party consistently urged in each National Campaign, beginning with 1920, the enactment of a Federal

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* (1916), 13, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup>Cyrus F. Adams, *The Republican Party and the Afro-American* (1908); Frederick Douglass, *U. S. Grant and the Colored People*. (Both in Congressional Library.)

<sup>12</sup>Johnson, Henry Lincoln, "The Negro under Wilson," *Republican Campaign Book* (1916), pp. 376-382.

<sup>13</sup>*Republican Campaign Book* (1896), p. 256.

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Anti-Lynching Law.<sup>14</sup> In the campaign of 1924, however, J. Weldon Johnson, Secretary of the N. A. A. C. P., scored<sup>15</sup> Senator Lodge, and other Republicans who let the Dyer Anti-Lynch Bill die because of the Democratic filibuster against it. Nevertheless, J. Weldon Johnson urged the colored voters of the country to vote irrespective of party, and on the basis of issues.

### NEGRO LEADERS

Negroes have been active as leaders in the campaigns of the Republican Party since 1872. Frederick Douglass, perhaps the greatest of Negro political leaders, made an appeal to the Negroes of the country,<sup>16</sup> and took the opportunity to advise them concerning the split in the Republican ranks of that year.<sup>17</sup> His ability is demonstrated further by his concise method of appeal used in the campaign<sup>18</sup> of 1876. It was then that he uttered that famous expression which has since been quoted by colored leaders in other campaigns. His advice was "the Republican Party is the ship, all else is the sea."

John Mercer Langston, B. K. Bruce and John

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* (1920), p. 94; (1924), p. 105; (1928), p. 118.

<sup>15</sup>*The Crisis* (1924), No. 28, p. 223.

<sup>16</sup>Douglass, Frederick, *U. S. Grant and the Colored People*. The appeal mentions the large numbers of colored people then in federal service.

<sup>17</sup>Washington, B. T., *op. cit.*, p. 285. Douglass presided over the National Convention of Colored Men at New Orleans in 1872.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 285-286.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

R. Lynch represent a group of leaders who fought unswervingly for the Republican Party prior to 1900. Langston, a prominent and eloquent speaker in early campaigns, was assigned to deliver speeches in 1888,<sup>19</sup> at Saratoga, N. Y., Galesburg, Ill., and for the Garfield Club at Pawtucket, R. I. B. K. Bruce, another noted leader, was quite active in the campaign for Harrison in 1892.<sup>20</sup> While John R. Lynch, the last of the group, was a frequent participant in many of the previous campaigns.<sup>21</sup>

For more recent years, the following Negroes<sup>22</sup> served as leaders in the Republican Party during Presidential Campaigns. In the campaign of 1900,<sup>23</sup> Cyrus F. Adams and Ernest Lyons were members of the Advisory Committee. The next two campaigns were conducted by Henry Lincoln Johnson and Cyrus Field Adams. The split<sup>24</sup> within the regular Republican ranks in 1912, witnessed a double campaign among Negroes, the regulars headed by Johnson, and Charles W. Anderson, now Collector of Internal Revenue in New York; and the Progressives led by James

<sup>19</sup>*Contested Election Case, Langston vs. Venable* (1888-1889) 1174-1175.

<sup>20</sup>Statements made by James Alexander, Elkhorn, W. Va., April 1, 1930. It is claimed Bruce, whose headquarters was at Washington, D. C., in 1892, spoke in West Virginia during one tour.

<sup>21</sup>See Lynch, J. R., "Facts on Reconstruction."

<sup>22</sup>Statements given by Perry Howard, colored member of the National Committee, Washington, D. C., May 31, 1930.

<sup>23</sup>*Republican National Convention* (1900), *preface*.

<sup>24</sup>"The Progressives and the Colored Man," *Outlook*, 101: 909-12.

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Hayes and Perry Howard. To unite the factions in 1916, one leader from each faction composed the Advisory Committee that year: Charles W. Anderson, Chairman, and Perry Howard, as Secretary. Other members who composed an Advisory Campaign Committee of 1916,<sup>25</sup> that met at the Republican Headquarters, New York City, during the Campaign were: Fred H. Moore, New York; W. Justin Carter, Sr., Pennsylvania; William P. Dabney, Ohio; William H. Lewis and W. C. Mathews, Massachusetts; Isaac Nutter, New Jersey; Phillip Waters, West Virginia; R. R. Church and J. C. Napier of Tennessee; Benjamin Davis and Dr. Ernest Lyons of Georgia, and James A. Cobb of the District of Columbia. The large membership on this Committee in 1916, and in the following campaign was considered necessary in order to solidify the split of 1912.

The Advisory Committee in the 1920 campaign was assigned to certain sections of the country. R. J. Cottrell and W. C. Mathews were assigned to the East; Editor Robert L. Vann and Robert J. Nelson, to the Middle West; Perry Howard, to the West; R. R. Church<sup>26</sup> and H. L. Johnson, to the border States, and to the South.

<sup>25</sup>*The Oracle* (1916), No. 18, p. 83.

<sup>26</sup>Church, R. R., President, Lincoln Republican League of Tennessee; member of Republican State Executive Committee, and Republican State Primary Board. *Negro Year Book* (1918-1919), p. 60.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

W. C. Mathews of Boston, the National Organizer for the Republican Campaign Committee in 1924, issued a statement<sup>27</sup> at the end of the campaign advocating a constructive program dedicated to the civil and political improvement of the thirteen millions of colored citizens of America, and including in its tenets requests for:

1. Representation in the diplomatic corps.
2. Appointment of an Under Secretary of State.
3. The appointment of a Civil Service Commissioner.
4. The appointment of an Assistant Postmaster-General.
5. Restoration of the office of Register of the Treasury to the race.
6. Appointment of a Minister to Haiti, and a Consul.
7. Appointment of an Assistant Attorney-General.
8. Appointment in the Educational Department.
9. Abolition of segregation in Government service.

The Colored Voters' Division,<sup>28</sup> established at the beginning of the Hoover-Curtis Campaign

<sup>27</sup> *Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), pp. 65-66.

<sup>28</sup> Letter, Louis R. Lautier, *Afro-American* press correspondent, 920 U Street, N.W., Washington, D. C., July, 1929.



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

had as its Chairman of the Executive Committee, John R. Hawkins, President of the Prudential Bank, Washington, D. C., and Financial Secretary of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and as Secretary, Albon L. Holsey of Tuskegee Institute, and Secretary of the National Negro Business League. Others included in the membership, were Walter Foster of Boston, State Senator Adelbert H. Roberts of Chicago, R. R. Church of Memphis, and Emmett J. Scott, Secretary-Treasurer of Howard University.

Certain Committees were designated to direct special activities during the campaign. Among them were: a Publicity Committee with Robert L. Vann as Chairman, Claude A. Barnett, Secretary, and representatives of practically every outstanding Colored newspaper in the country; an Organization Committee Eastern Bureau, Fred R. Moore, New York, Chairman; and Speakers Committee, Eastern survey, George W. Harris, New York City.

### DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Unlike the Republican Party, the Democratic Party makes no mention of the Negro in its platforms. It has now and then scored the attitude of the Republican Party toward the Negro, but has seldom offered a better solution.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Back in the campaign of 1880,<sup>29</sup> the Democrats charged the Republicans with permitting the swindling of the poor Freedmen's money in the failure of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. It appears that in the campaign of 1904,<sup>30</sup> the Democrats opposed the Republican methods of appealing to Negroes. They protested against the Republican Party plan to reduce representation in the South. Similarly in the campaign of 1924,<sup>31</sup> the Democrats pointed to the recess appointment of Walter L. Cohen as Comptroller of Customs, at the port of New Orleans, the subsequent submission of his nomination to the Senate by President Coolidge; the "Lily White" opposition to Cohen, a colored man, and the efforts of the Republican Senators to reject his nomination.

As a protest body, the National Negro Democratic Convention,<sup>32</sup> meeting on the 17th day of May, 1911, at Indianapolis, urged the colored voters of the United States to note the conditions surrounding them, to cease following any one party to their detriment, and thus divide their votes. This body then reaffirmed its allegiance to the Democratic Party, and urged further the intel-

<sup>29</sup>*Democratic Campaign Text Book* (1880), pp. 371-397.

<sup>30</sup>Dunn, J. P., "Negro Issue," Speech at Indianapolis, Ind. Sentinel Publishing Co., 1904. O. S. U. Library.

<sup>31</sup>Democratic National Committee Campaign, Documents, Weekly News Service, February 22, 1924. (Library of Congress.)

<sup>32</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1912), p. 30.

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

ligent, honest, law-abiding colored citizens to organize and bind themselves together in Democratic clubs for the election of 1912. This organization convening in New York City, in June, 1924, reasserted its appeal to the race "to cease being consecrated" to the Republican Party; and emphasized its position as representing 500,000 dissatisfied Negro voters.

### WILSON'S ATTITUDE IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1912 AND 1916

Woodrow Wilson in the campaign<sup>33</sup> of 1912 expressed "his earnest wish to see justice accorded to Negroes," to see them encouraged in every possible and proper way; and that if he should become President the colored people could count on him for fair dealing.

In the campaign of 1916, Wilson reasserted<sup>34</sup> his stand to support his original assurances of 1912, even though he was conscious of the fact that he had not lived up to them. Referring to his stand of 1912, *The Crisis* maintained:<sup>35</sup> "We need scarcely to say that Mr. Wilson grievously disappointed us."

The August issue of *The Crisis* in the 1924 campaign held:<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*The Crisis* (1912), No. 5, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* (1916), No. 3, p. 85.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* (1916), No. 13, pp. 16-17.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.* (1924).



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

"The Democratic Party appears to us in two distinct parts. The north wing of the party has recognized our demand in many States, and treated us with much fairness. But this northern wing is at the mercy of the solid South, with its rotten borough system, depending upon the disfranchisement of the Negro."

*The Crisis* further insisted that the Negro vote should be primarily a matter of individual candidates for office, according to their records.

### ATTITUDE OF JOHN W. DAVIS

It was stated later in the campaign of 1924,<sup>37</sup> that John W. Davis had attacked the Klan, established a Negro Bureau, and gained the support of such prominent Negroes as William H. Lewis, Assistant Attorney-General under Taft, and of Alice Dunbar Nelson. In its appeal to Negroes the Democratic Party maintained that their Presidential candidate dealt a blow to peonage as an institution in the case of the Government against Reynolds and Broughton;<sup>38</sup> second, that he had also argued and won the famous Grandfather Clause Case.

### DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Organized efforts of the Democratic Party to

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<sup>37</sup>*The Crisis* (1924), No. 28, p. 152.

<sup>38</sup>*Democratic Campaign Documents* (1924) in Congressional Library.

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

win Negro voters'' in a Presidential Campaign did not prevail before 1912. The Democratic Campaign among Negroes during that year was under the direction of Judge Hedspeth of New Jersey, who was assisted by Bishop Alexander Walters, and Dr. Joseph D. Johnson, prominent physician of Columbus, Ohio. Some little interest was shown in the campaign of 1916. Johnson and Hedspeth campaigned for Wilson that year, and again in 1920; Johnson was an active leader in the National Democratic Campaign.

The most potent efforts to gain Negro votes were made by the Democratic Party in 1924 and 1928. In the former campaign, Ferdinand Q. Morton was in charge of the Negro division, with Lester A. Walton as Secretary and Director of Publicity. Associated in this division were William H. Lewis, of Boston; Edward Henry, now a Philadelphia magistrate; and Alice Dunbar Nelson, in charge of the women. The Negro organization in the campaign of 1928 was directed by Julian D. Rainey of Boston, with Lester A. Walton in charge of publicity. The finances of this division were controlled by William Gaston, white. Bishop Recerdy C. Ransom, J. Finley Wilson, Grand Exalted Ruler of the Colored Elks, and

<sup>22</sup>Letter from Lester A. Walton, then correspondent to the *New York World*, 2816 8th Avenue, New York City, June 27, 1930. Dr. Joseph Johnson served as a Minister to Liberia under Wilson.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Commissioner Ferdinand Q. Morton were among the prominent Negroes who spoke in different States for Alfred Smith.

Concerning the campaign of 1928, the Secretary of Publicity writes:<sup>40</sup>

"We had the largest and most effective National Organization ever formed within our group in the interest of a Democratic nominee for President."

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The political activities of Negroes in the Socialist Party have been confined generally to Harlem since 1917. In 1924, the Socialists supported the Progressives, and endorsed their candidate, Senator Robert LaFollette. LaFollette attacked the Klan and established a Negro Bureau. In the last campaign, in 1928—although the Socialists did not put forth any special organized efforts<sup>41</sup> to secure the Negro's vote, they, like the Republicans, advocated in their platform, an Anti-Lynching Bill, making participation in lynching a felony. Frank R. Crosswaith, a Negro, was their Director of Negro Activities.

### THE CAMPAIGN OF 1928

For the American Negro, the campaign of 1928<sup>42</sup> was apparently quite unpleasant.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Letter from F. R. Crosswaith, August 1, 1929, 2311 7th Avenue, New York City.

<sup>42</sup>*The Crisis* (1928), No. 35, p. 418.



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

"The agreement and accord of the two leading parties in regard to him during that campaign seemingly became perfect and complete. Tentative gropings toward accord, date back to 1876, when under the plea of healing the wounds of Civil War, the Federal Government decided to give up all attempts at supervising national elections. From this compromise, the people passed through a long period when it was the recognized function of the Republican Party to deplore disfranchisement, and assert stoutly its intention to defend the rights of American Negroes in all ways. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, took a position which accepted Negro disfranchisement."

The political leaders of both parties in the 1928 campaign were charged with "permitting" without protest, the injection of the race issue into the campaign." Concerning this issue the *News Leader* of Richmond, Va., remarked:

"Why should the South go backward politically? Why should it be the slave of unfounded fears? The Negro has not involved himself in this campaign. The South's political salvation is not to

<sup>1</sup>*The Crisis* (1928), No. 35, pp. 416-417. Article in *The Crisis* by prominent Negro Republicans, Democrats and Socialists, deploring the injection of the race issue into the campaign and appealing to the nation for justice. See Merritt, D., "Politics and the Southern Negro," *Outlook*, No. 149, pp. 581-582.

<sup>2</sup>The New South, quoted in *The Crisis*, No. 36, p. 63.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

be worked out through a unity born of hate, of ignorance, or of self-deception."

Negroes at intervals have been candidates for membership in Congress from 1870 to 1900—covering the early period during which at least twenty-two Negroes served in Congress—and from 1917 to 1930, thus representing two periods of Congressional Campaigns. The campaigns of Langston of Virginia and George C. Scurlock of North Carolina have been selected as representative of the first period. For the second period, emphasis will be centered around the more recent campaigns of 1928, 1929, and 1930.

### THE LANGSTON CAMPAIGN—1888

The Fourth District of Virginia, in 1868, was known as the "Black Belt." The voting population of the district in the 1880 census was as follows: Colored, 19,855; Whites, 17,770. Of the Whites not more than 1,200 voters were Republicans, thus about seventeen colored to every white Republican. In the three-cornered campaign of that year, Langston, colored, and formerly President of the Virginia State College at Petersburg, ran as an Independent Republican only after the delegates who were for him were not accepted



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

in the Farmville Convention.<sup>45</sup> A number of the prominent Whites<sup>46</sup> who were opposed to the "boss-ridden machine" of William Mahone, supported Langston, among whom were Colonel J. D. Brady, a member of the Republican National Committee, Colonel John W. Woltz, and W. H. Weiss, "men of character and principle, earnest and tenacious." It is said that ninety percent of the colored and about fifty percent of the white Republicans preferred the colored candidate to Judge Arnold, the Mahone nominee, stating that "in native ability, in training, and in all that goes to make up true manhood," he represents the people.

The campaign,<sup>47</sup> according to Langston, was spirited, vigorous, and persistent; and according to his opposition "bitter and cruel." Langston, at the beginning, organized a general Committee composed of the most intelligent, energetic and reliable colored men with two or three Whites, and with headquarters in a building purchased and owned by him, designated as "Langston's Hall."

Not only the men, but also the women were organized. The men were known as the "Harri-

<sup>45</sup>Langston, J. M., *From Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol*, p. 447. It is said that Mahone recognized any persons claiming to be delegates coming from communities where people had formally and regularly elected their delegates; and delegates who came with proper credentials were refused if they said they were for Langston.

<sup>46</sup>*U. S. Contested Election Case, Langston vs. Venable* (1888-1889), p. 1174-1175.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 450, 457-458.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

son, Morton and Langston Invincibles." It seems that although Langston was warned against attending certain meetings, yet he made addresses at several places in the district. His success<sup>48</sup> was more entirely due to the influence of the women than to any other cause outside of the actual vote cast for him. At the time the Democrats were alleged to have full control of the election machinery in the district. The returns of the election favored the Democratic opponent, Venable, by a 641 majority. After a lengthy contest, Langston was seated on September 23, 1890.

The campaign of George C. Scurlock<sup>49</sup> received the moral and financial support of the Republican Party of his district of North Carolina. In the Republican Convention held at Warsaw, Duplin County, of that year, Scurlock, in opposition to Judge Robinson of Wayne County, was nominated on the Republican ticket. Like the Langston campaign, he was supported by such a prominent ex-official and party leader as Governor Curtis H. Brogden, representing Wayne County.

Scurlock's election at the polls was by no means assured, the district being normally Democratic by a safe margin. The normal Republican vote of the district was about twelve thousand. There

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<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>49</sup>A letter from Attorney George C. Scurlock, Washington, D. C., February 27, 1930.

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

were, however, certain handicaps to prevent his election. Some colored Republicans did not take to the colored candidate. The Payne Election Law of that State made it very difficult for the colored Republicans to qualify and even some Whites, of the illiterate class. It is claimed that some fraud was practiced in one or two of the counties. Though losing to his Democratic opponent, Scurlock received many votes from Whites, and some precincts usually Democratic gave him their support. His total was approximately ten thousand.

In both campaigns mentioned, the candidates were supported by prominent white party leaders. In both a few Negroes did not support the racial candidate. In the former, Langston failed in election, but won out in contest. The first involves a black Republican district, while the second involves a normally Democratic district. Both districts, however, were under the control of Democratic election machinery.

The next group of Congressional Campaigns, unlike those just mentioned, were waged in three large northern cities, centers of large Negro population.

Since 1917, in New York the Socialist Party has nominated and supported prominent Negroes on their ticket.<sup>50</sup> In 1924, the Republican Party of

<sup>50</sup>Letter from Frank Crosswaith, Negro organizer, Socialist Party, New York City.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

the Twenty-first Congressional District, nominated a Negro, Dr. Charles Roberts, as Republican candidate for Congress, who lost to his Democratic opponent by 7,000 votes.

The campaign of E. A. Johnson,<sup>61</sup> for Congress, from the Twenty-first Congressional District of New York, in 1928, was quite interesting in that it demonstrated what can be done when the full strength of the colored voters of the district is exerted. It was known that the Democratic vote had exceeded the Republican in the district, on an average of 7,500 to 8,000 for several years past. In one district—the Twenty-third Assembly District—53,000 white voters had been registered; and seventy percent of these were Democrats. Johnson, with his forces of some 350 active workers spent about ten days making a house to house canvass of the Negro inhabitants.

From the records gathered, 60,000 Negroes were eligible and pledged themselves to vote. There were some handicaps, however. All did not register. Some were negligent in putting off registration, some indifferent, and some hailing from States where these qualifications prevailed considered the poll tax and property qualifications a barrier; and some hesitated on account of the literacy

<sup>61</sup>Johnson, E. A., "A Congressional Campaign," *The Crisis* (1929), No. 36, p. 118.



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

test. The returns certified 56,992 votes for Weller, the white Democratic candidate, and 45,610 votes for Johnson. The campaign increased the colored vote from approximately 23,000 to 41,000; and in the colored election districts the colored candidate won on an average of six and eight to one, and actually carried some of the white districts.

Nineteen-twenty-nine witnessed the most spirited and spectacular campaign ever waged in the Twenty-first Congressional District, in which three Negro candidates<sup>52</sup> aspired for Congress: Hubert T. Delaney, Republican; Frank R. Crosswaith, Socialist, and Richard B. Moore, Workers Party. Prominent Negroes<sup>53</sup> from several southern and a few northern States sent contributions to the Republican Campaign Committee to aid Delaney. Delaney presented an appeal to the white Republicans of the district for fair play over radio station WPCW, through the courtesy of the pastor of the Chelsea Methodist-Episcopal Church. The young attorney, Delaney, suffered a greater defeat<sup>54</sup> than Dr. Charles Roberts, who in 1924 lost by 7,000; and E. A. Johnson, in 1928 by 11,382.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup>*Pittsburg Courier*, November 9, 1929; *Afro-American*, August 10, 1929.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, October 12, 1929.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, November 9, 1929.

<sup>55</sup>Johnson, S. Vote as given by his personal figures in *The Crisis*, April, 1929, shows his defeat by 11,382 votes. *Pittsburg Courier* reports it at 10,000.

# THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

## CHICAGO—1928

At the death of Martin B. Madden, the "Black Belt" in Chicago strove to get one of their own group in Congress. The Congressional Committee of the First District of Illinois then designated Oscar DePriest as the regular Republican candidate. The campaign<sup>66</sup> was an active and bitter one. DePriest, the regular Republican nominee, was opposed not only by the Democratic nominee, but by another of his own race, William H. Harrison.

In this campaign DePriest brought into play all of his ability and the full strength of the regular Republican organizations of the first, second and third wards, the principal political units of the First District. The colored people as a whole were responsible for his election; and the best was done by the women voters of the District. The result was as follows:

DePriest, 24,399—regular Republican

Baker (white), 20,036—Democrat

Harrison, 5,622—Independent Republican

DePriest won the election by 4,363 votes over Baker, his opponent. Had DePriest been the only Negro candidate, perhaps his majority might have been 10,000.

<sup>66</sup>Letter from Morris Lewis, secretary for DePriest, Washington, D. C., May 21, 1930.



## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

The Congressional Campaign held in April, 1930, was the regular primary,<sup>57</sup> where DePriest for the first time went before the voters of his party as the regular Republican candidate. As in the 1928 campaign, he was again opposed by a Negro in the person of Roscoe Conklin Simmons. It is reported that the DePriest organization functioned perfectly. A long series of neighborhood meetings were held as well as several large mass meetings. When the votes were tabulated, it was found that DePriest defeated Simmons by over 12,000; and was elected as the Republican candidate, without the intercession of any Committee. In the final election, held in November, 1930, DePriest defeated his Democratic opponent by a majority of 8,000 in spite of the Democratic landslide in Illinois.

The campaign<sup>58</sup> of Joseph L. McLemore, a young attorney of St. Louis, in the Twelfth District of Missouri, in 1928, was quite interesting and unusual. It is reported that prior to the filing of his declaration as a candidate, McLemore was endorsed by the Democratic Congressional Committee which was composed of ten white men and ten white women. He was opposed in the primary campaign by E. G. Hancock, a white man, who

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2. DePriest was also renamed Ward Committeeman, having received the support of the Thompson organization. See *Pittsburg Courier*, April 11, 1930.

<sup>58</sup>Letter from J. L. McLemore, St. Louis, Mo., May 12, 1930.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

was defeated by nearly 2,000 votes, although not more than 500 Negroes voted in the Democratic primary, others voted in the Republican primary.

It appears, moreover, that the campaign for the general election was conducted on a high level. The Negro Democratic nominee claimed the support of Senator Harry Dawes, and the entire Democratic organization of the Twelfth District; while Dyer, the long standing Republican Congressman, and well known for his efforts in behalf of the Dyer Anti-Lynch Bill of that district, sought the support of the Negroes. According to McLemore's statements, scarcely a Negro could be induced to make a fight on some statements concerning his candidacy. The final election was quite significant. McLemore received approximately six thousand Negro votes. Dyer received 24,000. In Dyer's own precinct, reported to be all white, McLemore defeated him; in McLemore's precinct which is said to be nearly all colored, Dyer defeated him. The Democratic nominee admitted a defeat by 6,000, and announced that had 3,000 Negroes who voted for Congressman Dyer voted for him the Negro group would have more representation in Congress. The Democratic nominee attributes his defeat to a prevailing sentiment among Negroes that the white Democrats were

## IN THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

not sincere in their support of a Negro for Congress.

At this point a few important facts might be summarized concerning this chapter.

Prior to 1912, Negro leaders had generally been with the Republican Party.

Even though the Negro was without leadership in the Republican National Conventions from 1912 to 1920, his leadership was sought more than ever in the campaign of 1916. No doubt the selection of a large representative Advisory Committee that year was done for two reasons: (1) There had been a reduction of colored delegates from the South in the preceding Convention, a program that had been opposed by a few prominent Negro leaders since 1884. (2) Fear that a few dissatisfied Negro leaders who had organized a National Negro Democratic Convention in 1912, would likely take advantage of the split in the Republican ranks, and thereby keep the morale of the campaign at low ebb. In spite of the efforts put forth by the colored Republican leaders, their ranks were not united until the campaign of 1920, under the guidance of Will Hays. This Republican gain had been aided by the indifference of Negro Democratic leaders in 1920 toward policies of the Democratic Party.

Republicans, Democrats, and Socialists showed

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

signs of effective leadership with the organization of Negro divisions in 1924 and 1928.

It is significant to note that at the end of the last two National Campaigns, the colored Republican leader made certain recommendations to the President-elect seeking the removal of certain administrative injustices to the Negro group, and seeking a larger share in Presidential appointments in keeping with their support.

In view of the Negro's support in these campaigns these questions arise: What has been the attitude of the Presidents toward the Negro race after being placed in office? What are those evils of which Negroes complain most, and what remedies have been made? Around these problems, interest will center in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER V

### In the National Administrations FEDERAL AID

**T**HREE Presidents favored Federal aid for Negro education. Rutherford B. Hayes<sup>1</sup> felt that liberal and permanent provision should be made for the support of free schools by the State Governments in the South, and if necessary, be supplemented by the legitimate aid from the National Treasury. Chester A. Arthur, the second of the group, realizing the condition of affairs in the South, and the responsibilities of the freedmen, recommended<sup>2</sup> "all that can be done by local legislation and private generosity should be supplemented by such aid as can be constitutionally afforded by the National Government."

The attitude of Benjamin Harrison toward Federal aid for the education of the freedmen was more outspoken, yet possessed of far-reaching vision. Concerning this matter he insisted<sup>3</sup> that "as the suggestion of a National Grant-in-Aid grows, chiefly out of the condition and needs of

<sup>1</sup>*Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, pp. 7, 444.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8, 59.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9, 54-56.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

the emancipated slave and his descendants, the relief should be applied to the need that suggested it." His recommendation urged that any appropriation made for this purpose be so limited in annual amount as to the time over which it is to extend as will give the local school authorities opportunity in a reasonable time to assume the burden themselves.<sup>4</sup>

As to more recent years, Presidents Coolidge<sup>5</sup> and Hoover favored increased Federal appropriations for Howard University. And as a basis for justifying the appropriations for that school in 1928, the situation in certain Southern States with reference to the use of Federal funds was pointed out.<sup>6</sup> It was stated that there were no Negroes in a public institution of four-year grade in Mississippi, while there were thirty-three students from that State at Howard. It was stated further, that the Whites received \$234,649, and according to that same percentage Negroes in the State of Mississippi, would have received \$258,035. The Negroes, as it was, received only \$39,592 from the Federal Government. Had they received their

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56. President Harrison recommended a partial Federal supervision of elections without taking over all processes of elections now provided by law. The colored man should be protected in all his relations with our Federal Government whether as litigant, juror, or witness in our courts, or an elector for member of Congress, or as a peaceful traveler upon our interstate railways.

<sup>5</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>*Congressional Record*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, No. 69, pp. 3710-3712.

## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

proportional share from both State and Federal Governments, the total amount for the State (colored) College would have been \$842,634. But the amount appropriated by the State of Mississippi, plus that of the Federal Government only amounted to \$94,843. The statistics mentioned further, that out of the seventeen Southern States, not a single Negro was registered in a public institution of four-year college grade; whereas there were 259 students from eleven of those States at Howard University. Three hundred and six students from the seventeen States were taking medicine, and no provision is made for it in any of these States except West Virginia, while White institutions in these seventeen States received a total of \$5,305,452 from the Federal Government. Negroes received \$282,275 (most of which goes for education of junior college grade). Negroes should have received according to this report, on a basis of the population, \$2,114,494. Whites received a total of \$31,651,836 from the seventeen Southern States, while the Negroes received from the same States only \$1,850,809.

For more than fifty years Howard University has received appropriations from the Federal Government, under the Department of the Interior. In the Sixty-eighth Congress, an attempt "to cripple the university" was successful in the House



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

where the appropriation was ruled out on a point of order. The measure<sup>7</sup> being restored by the Senate, provided for \$650,000, the highest amount ever appropriated for that school. In 1930, President Hoover approved an appropriation<sup>8</sup> of \$1,249,000, for that school, now that its legality has been fixed by an act of Congress, thus making it a Federal school.

The Federal Government also aids<sup>9</sup> in the development of Negro farming in the South. The Department of Agriculture created a special division of agricultural extension work for the Negro farmer under Secretary Wallace. To cover this field over 290 men and women are employed by the Department as Agricultural Extension agents, to work with the Negroes for improvements on farms in fifteen Southern States, \$431,342 being expended in that work during the fiscal year of 1923.

### FEDERAL PATRONAGE AND THE NEGRO

Perhaps the highest positions generally held by Negroes under Federal appointment have been Recorder of Deeds of the District of Columbia, Register of the Treasury, and Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti. Several Negroes

<sup>7</sup> Democrats attempt to cripple Negro university. *Republican Campaign Book* (1924), p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> *The Crisis*, (August, 1930), No. 37, p. 267.

<sup>9</sup> *Republican Campaign Book* (1924), p. 320.

## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

have held the office of Recorder<sup>10</sup> since 1881. Frederick Douglas, Henry P. Cheatham, John C. Dancy, Henry Lincoln Johnson, and Arthur G. Froe, have served<sup>11</sup> in that position. Grover Cleveland during his administrations followed the Republican tradition by appointing James C. Mathews of New York to serve in that office, but Woodrow Wilson,<sup>12</sup> contrary to the precedent of decades, put a white man in his place. Arthur G. Froe, of West Virginia, appointed at the beginning of the Harding administration, was succeeded by Jefferson S. Coage, of Delaware, in 1930.

A favorite post to which Negroes have aspired, is that of Register of the Treasury. Beginning in 1881,<sup>13</sup> B. K. Bruce, Judson W. Lyons of Georgia, W. T. Vernon of Kansas, and J. C. Napier of Tennessee, all prominent leaders, served under Republican Presidents, until the advent of Woodrow Wilson. Cleveland's failure to appoint a Negro to that position was due to his policy in regard to colored office holders.<sup>14</sup> Since the expiration of the Taft administration, no Negro has held that

<sup>10</sup>Johnson, H. L., "The Negro under Wilson," *Ibid.* (1916), p. 38.

<sup>11</sup>Washington, B. T., *Frederick Douglass*, pp. 294-295.

<sup>12</sup>Johnson, H. L., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup>*Republican Campaign Book* (1916), p. 38. See *Washington Post*, April 28, 1929, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>Miller, Kelly, *The Everlasting Stain*, pp. 222-223. Mr. Cleveland's policy was to send a white man to Haiti, and a colored man to a white state.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

position, the Wilson administration having appointed Gabe E. Parker and Houston B. Techee, both American Indians. As it appears, the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations have not deemed it wise to renew the tradition set by President Harrison in 1891.

The first position of importance both in prestige and esteem, and to which prominent Negroes have been appointed since 1869<sup>15</sup> is that of Minister Resident and Consul General to the Negro Republic of Haiti. In 1869, President Grant appointed Ebenezer D. Bassett, who was succeeded in 1877 by John Mercer Langston.<sup>16</sup> Langston served until 1885. Douglas appointed to that post in 1889 resigned shortly thereafter, being replaced by Henry M. Smythe of Virginia. William F. Powell was named as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Haitian post by President McKinley. Henry W. Furniss of Indiana, appointed by Roosevelt, was the last colored Minister to be sent there. This position has been vacant during the American occupation of the Island. Negro politicians expect this occupation to cease soon, and consequently are anxiously awaiting this coveted opportunity, as Haitians seem-

<sup>15</sup> "Negro Politicians Striving for Office," the *Washington Post*, April 28, 1929, p. 6. This article appears to be fairly accurate in content, especially in comparison with other sources, such as a 38-page circular by C. F. Adams on Negro appointments in Federal service in 1908. (Congressional Library.)

<sup>16</sup> Langston, J. M., *op. cit.*, p. 374.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

ingly do not oppose, but welcome Negro diplomats from the United States.<sup>17</sup>

One reason why Negro politicians desire the Haitian position is because of the attractive salary offered. In 1869, the position afforded a salary of \$7,500. The second incumbent, J. M. Langston, suffered a reduction<sup>18</sup> of salary to \$5,000. Without repealing the law, it is shown that the Democratic House, through the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, believing that this procedure would work the repeal of the law then recommended an appropriation of \$5,000. The Department of State notified Langston that his salary thereafter would be \$5,000, to which he did not raise objection until he returned to America in 1885. He therefore presented through an attorney his claims for \$7,666.66 to the United States Court of Claims, and being sustained in the claim, the opposition appealed to the United States Supreme Court, where Langston was again sustained. Henry W. Furniss, the last of the colored Ministers, received<sup>19</sup> a salary of \$10,000, which is the regular pay for that post.

<sup>17</sup>*Afro-American*, July 18, 1930. Article by O. J. Murphy, president of the *Afro-American*, who has just returned from Haiti, having accompanied the Negro Education Commission to that country.

<sup>18</sup>Langston, J. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 401-408; also *U. S. vs. Langston*, *U. S. Reports* (1885-1886), pp. 118, 388-394. Court of Claims and U. S. Supreme Court. Committee on Appropriations, mindful of Langston's campaign activities desired to embarrass him.

<sup>19</sup>Adams, O. F., *The Republican Party and the Afro-American*, p. 17. (Pamphlet in Congressional Library.)

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

### THE PRESIDENTS AND NEGRO APPOINTMENTS

The question may be justly asked, what has been the attitude of the Presidents toward the Negro in general party patronage. Quite a few Negroes were appointed to positions in national service<sup>20</sup> under Grant,<sup>21</sup> Garfield, Hayes, Harrison, and McKinley, and during these terms no complaints were made by the South against Republican Presidential appointments of Negroes.

Under Cleveland,<sup>22</sup> a Democratic President, it was assured that Negroes should have suitable and appropriate recognition. This Cleveland felt could be effected better if Negroes would divide their votes, and thus be accorded the same recognition as other people. The attitude of Roosevelt<sup>23</sup> did not differ to any large extent from that of Cleveland. Roosevelt maintained with regard to political appointments, that all candidates, no matter what their backing might be, must possess good character and reasonable qualifications for the service. In regard to the South, Roosevelt held that whenever he could find Republicans who met the test he should appoint them, without regard to their color, and that when he could not find

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<sup>20</sup> *Harper's*, May 2, 1903, No. 47, p. 729

<sup>21</sup> Douglas, Frederick, *President Grant and the Colored Man*. (Congressional Library.)

<sup>22</sup> Lynch, J. R., *Facts on Reconstruction*, p. 273.

<sup>23</sup> Bishop, J. B., "The Negro and Public Office," *The Inter. Quart.* (1903), No. 7, pp. 231-237; also "Elihu Root on the Negro Problem," *Harper's* (1903), No. 47, pp. 729, 306-307. He was opposed to Negro Suffrage, but evidently favored a few Negro appointments at the South.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

Republicans who met the test he would appoint Democrats. As far as Negroes were concerned, he should submit them to precisely the same test that he enforced upon white men. They must be fit for the place, their color in no degree modifying the test. The two examples which follow, illustrate a condition which influenced appointments of Negroes even under other Presidents.

In keeping with this test the action Roosevelt took in two instances, aroused a storm of protests in the South. The first case is of Mrs. Minnie Cox, colored, appointed Postmaster at Indianola, Miss., by President Harrison, early in the second year of his term, and serving under him three years. Again she was appointed in 1897 by President McKinley. Her standing was endorsed by the best and most reputable people in the town, being bonded by a Democratic State Senator from the district, together with the leading banker of Indianola—an ex-State Senator from the district, also a Democrat; and it is claimed that she owned ten to fifteen thousand dollars' worth of property in the county. It is claimed further that the reports of Post Office Inspectors who inspected the office from time to time show that Mrs. Cox gave the utmost satisfaction, being at all times courteous, faithful, competent and honest in the discharge of her duties. Because of alleged physical threats, she



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

resigned in January, 1903. At any rate, the town officials proclaimed their inability to protect her unless she would resign from office.

A few days later, the nomination of Dr. W. D. Crum, graduate of medicine at Howard University, as Collector of the Port of Charleston, S. C., was sent to the Senate. Immediately disqualifying charges were presented to President Roosevelt in opposition to this appointment, which when investigated were found to be absolutely false. Further charges were presented "on account of color," but Roosevelt presented this nomination to the Senate, even until Crum's<sup>24</sup> appointment was approved by the Senate. As a matter of fact, the position carried with it a salary of a little less than twelve hundred dollars.

McKinley gave the colored people nearly seventy appointments, and a few were added by Roosevelt in his administrations. According to C. F. Adams, Assistant Register of the Treasury, the "Afro-Americans" received more patronage<sup>25</sup> under Roosevelt's administration than under any preceding administrations.

The changing attitude of the South in regard to the appointment of Negroes to public offices, obviously evident in the Roosevelt administration,

<sup>24</sup> Adams, C. F., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

was given recognition in later administrations. The policy of President Taft<sup>26</sup> in this connection, differed from that of Roosevelt as follows: "What I have done in this line of recognition of the democracy of the South, has been without sacrifice of any interest of my own party," and continuing: "I have appointed many Negroes to office and have given some of them like Lewis, Johnson, and McKinley, offices of essential dignity at Washington. What I have not done is to force them upon unwilling communities in the South itself." The attitude of Woodrow Wilson differed from those of Roosevelt and Taft.

Wilson appeared unable to appoint Negroes to such positions as the Register of the Treasury, and as Minister to Haiti, the treasured "plums" for the colored leaders. One appointment of importance that the great exponent of democracy did make in keeping with traditional recognition, was that of Minister to the Republic of Liberia. Further, in the midst of the late World War, the student movement at Howard University, assisted by other Negro colleges, was successful in getting an Officers' Training Camp established at Fort Des Moines, through Secretary Newton D. Baker of the War Department. Secretary Baker also ap-

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<sup>26</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1912), p. 80.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

pointed Emmett J. Scott, then of Tuskegee, as special assistant in his department.

It seems that the attitude of Harding<sup>27</sup> did not differ much from that of Wilson. Harding's political plan involved, (1) White leadership for the South, (2) a division of the Negro vote. He insisted that Negroes should be permitted to vote when fit, and that white men be barred when unfit. His speech in Alabama brought forth much criticism<sup>28</sup> from prominent Negroes as well as Whites.

Perry Howard was appointed under Harding as an Assistant District Attorney, and had charge of all railroad suits brought against the Government in the United States Court of Claims.

To the appointments of Harding, Coolidge added the assignment of Walter Cohen as Comptroller of the Customs at New Orleans; one member of the Board of Mediation and Conciliation; an Assistant to the Director of the Veterans Bureau; one Assistant to the Alaskan Railway Engineering Commission, and one Assistant Chief Clerk-at-Large to the Railway Mail Service, which was the first highest position ever filled by a colored man in the Post Office Department, the second being that of Assistant Solicitor, recently assigned to W. C. Hueston of Gary, Ind., under

<sup>27</sup>*The Crisis* (1922), No. 23, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup>Miller, Kelly, *The Everlasting Stain*, V, 231-240. Note his open letter to President Wilson, *Ibid.*, VII, 240-300.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

the Hoover administration. Not only did Coolidge approve the appointments which have been stated, but he succeeded in appointing Negroes to the entire staff at the United States Veterans Hospital at Tuskegee, Ala. The Hoover administration has added the position of Assistant Solicitor, which pays a salary of \$7,500, the small business specialist in the Department of Commerce, and raised the salary of the Minister to Liberia with an improved status.

Both the Coolidge and Hoover administrations assigned Negro Commissions to important investigations. The reports of the Coolidge Commissions indicated a careful interest in the welfare and advancement of the people involved. The Commission of five to the Virgin Islands<sup>29</sup> appointed by Coolidge recommended a few economic, social, and political changes essential to the well-being, the protection, and the advancement of the people of that island. The second Commission in 1927, though appointed by Mr. Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, was authorized<sup>30</sup> to investigate all complaints arising from colored flood refugees, and to make suggestions for improvements in methods and administration.

<sup>29</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), p. 181.

<sup>30</sup>For a detailed report, see *Final Report of the Colored Advisory Commission—Mississippi Flood Disaster* (1927), by the American National Red Cross, p. 21.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

President Hoover has quite recently assigned a noted colored man, Charles Johnson, to co-operate with the League of Nations, and the Liberian Government, in order to investigate charges of slavery in the little Republic. Another Commission was appointed by Mr. Hoover to survey the educational conditions and needs of the Haitian people.

As far back as 1872, a personal survey was carried out by Frederick Douglass, in order to ascertain just what part the colored man had in the Federal Service. He reported that Negroes were to be found in all departments of the Government in large numbers. The policy of maintaining a goodly number of minor appointments as a bait for the control of the State Party machinery in the South, was seemingly observed by all of the Presidents up to 1908. In fact, the Republican Party in the campaign of 1900, published a partial list<sup>31</sup> of Federal appointments (58) given to colored men. The list contained a few major appointments in foreign service, to Russia, Brazil, Paraguay, Santo Domingo, and to France—eleven in all. Other positions listed were Collectors of Internal Revenue, Collectors of Port, Collectors of Custom, and quite a few Postmasters of small cities in Georgia and other States. Fifteen thou-

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<sup>31</sup> *Republican Campaign Text Book* (1900), p. 149.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

sand eight hundred and sixty-eight positions in the ten Federal Departments yielded \$5,538,612 in salaries. Fifteen thousand and fifty of these so-called positions were enrollments in the Army, leaving 818 for all other Departments.

In 1912<sup>22</sup> the Republican Party published a new list containing more than fifty prominent positions occupied by colored persons, 19 of which had been appointed by Taft, including a Negro Assistant Attorney General. With these, salaries aggregated to \$106,660. A table given in this connection shows that 19,729 positions consisting of officers, clerks, and other Federal employees were held by Negroes in 1912. Approximately eight thousand of this number were enlisted in the Army and Navy, leaving a little over eleven thousand in other Federal employment. The lists of major and minor Presidential appointable positions held by colored men in Federal service published in 1916 and 1924, evince a decided reduction in comparison with those of 1900, 1908, 1912. While the number of Presidential appointive positions, more especially in the diplomatic and consular field, decreased considerably during that period, yet the actual number of all Federal employees, whatever their rank, increased. This is further shown by a

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.* (1912), pp. 238-239.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

report from the Department of Labor<sup>33</sup> in 1928, which says that the number of colored Federal employees increased from 22,540 in 1910, to 51,882 in 1928, while the salaries during that period increased from \$12,456 to \$64,483. The largest number employed in a Department, according to that report, was 25,390 in the Post Office Department; and the smallest number being 143 in the General Accounting Office. The average salary paid amounted to \$1,243 a year.

Concerning this matter, the United States Civil Service Commission writes further:

"According to the census of 1920, Negroes constituted slightly less than 9.9 percent of the population of continental United States, whereas according to a statement issued by the United States Department of Labor on September 8, 1928, Negroes occupied slightly more than 9.1 percent of the positions in the Federal executive Civil Service on June 30, 1928."

But the kinds of positions Negroes occupy in general Civil Service and their limitations will be considered later.

To understand the attitude of Mr. Hoover toward Negro leaders and appointments in Federal Service, it only becomes necessary for one to reflect upon the statements<sup>34</sup> made during the

<sup>33</sup>Quoted by National Civil Service Commission, in letter, June 26, 1930. Comment on report in *The Crisis* (1928), No. 35, p. 377.

<sup>34</sup>*The Crisis*, No. 35, p. 418.

## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

campaign of 1928, statements which Southerners interpreted as a promise to appoint no Negroes to office. A southern newspaper<sup>35</sup> boasted of the fact that the South had not been harrassed by the appointment of Negroes since the inception of the Taft administration. At the Republican National Convention that year, Ben Davis, colored political leader of Georgia, failed to receive the recognition of the Republican Party as a member of the National Committee. Perry Howard, colored Republican Committeeman in Mississippi, and S. H. Redmond, colored, Chairman of the State Committee,<sup>36</sup> were accused of being "the brains" of bartering Federal patronage in Post Office appointments. Charges were made against them in Mississippi, and in those cases, Howard and Redmond were finally acquitted.<sup>37</sup> Further, the Negro leaders were informed through the medium of the Press that only trustworthy leaders with the support of the people of their State would be recognized in matters of Federal patronage. It is stated that the reason for this attitude was to develop two party systems in the South, a matter which is obviously uncertain as long as Negro leaders maintain control.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* (1928), p. 380.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 121, 135-136. "A great majority of postmasters in Mississippi are Democrats. It is possible that Democrats have been the buyers."

<sup>37</sup>"Mr. Hoover and the South," *The Crisis* (1929), No. 36, pp. 131-132.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Thus the Postmaster General announced<sup>28</sup> immediately after the inception of the Hoover administration the withdrawal of public patronage until the Republicans of South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi, should place the control of their Party Organizations in the hands of men and women who are genuinely desirous of promoting honesty. Until then the Post Office Department would on its own initiative seek the advice of citizens of those States. But what will be the outcome of this stand on the part of the present administration, is not altogether clear, inasmuch as it has been reported<sup>29</sup> that Secretaries Brown and Newton conferred with Ben Davis recently deposed Negro political leader of Georgia, offering him a voice back in the party for the administration of a State Convention on April 19, 1930. Perry Howard and Mrs. E. B. Booze, colored, are still the Republican members of the National Committee in Mississippi. It does not appear that any of these leaders receive much recognition in public patronage at the hands of the present administration; yet it has been stated that "the plan to purge the Party in the South is a joke."

It has been pointed out that Mr. Hoover at-

<sup>28</sup> *Washington Post*, March 27, 1929; *Pittsburg Courier*, March 15, 1929.

<sup>29</sup> "Brookhart to Push Georgia Deal Quiz," *Washington Post*, April 2, 1930. See Washington Notes, *The New Republic*, April 22, 1931, pp. 274-275; and Washington Notes, *The New Republic*, April 29, 1931, pp. 301-302.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

tempted to ignore Negro political leaders in the South, particularly in the States that have been mentioned. The next question arises: "What then is his attitude toward appointments of Negroes?" It would seem off-hand that the attitude of the President is to place emphasis in the direction of Booker Washington's theory.<sup>40</sup> In the beginning of President Hoover's administration, he appointed James A. Jackson, formerly of "the Bill Board" as a small business specialist in the Department of Commerce, to co-operate with Negro business enterprises in stressing a developmental program. Mr. Hoover, like his predecessor, Calvin Coolidge, has shown by virtue of his approval to the Federal appropriation of \$1,249,000 for Howard University, his interest in the educational as well as the economic development of that group. As for appointments, it may be said that the President recommended<sup>41</sup> the increase in salary of the Liberian Post from \$5,000 to \$10,000, but was at first denied by the Senate and later approved. He has added the new appointment of Assistant Solicitor, carrying with it a salary much higher than any appointment ever carried by Negroes, with the exception of the diplomatic post to Haiti. Mr. Hoover, then, seems to favor but

<sup>40</sup>Theory to be pointed out in the next chapter.

<sup>41</sup>"No Raise in Liberian Post," *Pittsburg Courier*, April 12, 1930.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

few Negroes in political appointments of higher importance.

### EFFORTS OF NEGRO ORGANIZATIONS IN 1924 AND 1928

The discussion thus far has hinged about the Party patronage positions. Despite the report of the Department of Labor issued during the 1928 campaign which seemingly infers that Negroes received a "square deal" as to positions in Federal Service, the N.A.A.C.P. and the Civil Liberties Bureau of Colored Elks launched an intensive drive, having opposed discrimination against Negroes in the Federal service.

A brief history of this complaint shows that for many years there has been some dissatisfaction about the treatment of colored Americans in the Civil Service at Washington, D. C., but these charges have been difficult to sustain owing to the fear on the part of Federal employees that they might lose their jobs. Further evidence shows that during Reconstruction when Negroes began to enter Civil Service, they were by common consent or express order segregated in parts of rooms, or in rooms by themselves. Appointments in the Civil Service, even after reformed methods and examinations came in, were difficult to obtain by colored applicants.



## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

As the political influence of Negroes increased, and trained colored applicants appeared, many of them were employed. The question of complaint that has arisen in recent years has been not altogether with reference to the number of Federal employees. Concerted action, moreover, has been directed toward eliminating color discrimination in service. It is said that during the administrations of Cleveland, Harrison, and McKinley, race discrimination in Government Departments was at a minimum, but that the advent of the Wilson administration in 1913 marked a determined effort to give Negro Civil Service employees "a nice arrangement."

Two separate investigations were made by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and complaints were set forth by that organization, and the Civil Liberties Bureau. Both National Organizations for the promotion of Negro civic improvement were assisted by such Negro citizens as Monroe Trotter of Boston and W. B. Curry of Springfield, Ohio. The investigation<sup>43</sup> shows color discrimination as follows:

<sup>43</sup>*The Crisis* (1928), No. 35, pp. 369, 387-388. This movement to oppose color discrimination, dates back to 1913 when the N. A. A. C. P. took up the matter with Mr. Wilson. In 1923, attempts were made to get facts, but could not get them. In 1925, the N. A. A. C. P. sent a white agent to Washington whose interviews among white and colored, confirmed the existence of segregation by race in Federal service. In 1926 Monroe Trotter went to Mr. Coolidge and later, in 1927, Neval Thomas representing the local N. A. A. C. P., and in 1928 W. B. Curry, Ohio. *Congressional Record*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, No. 59, p. 10657. For activities of Civil Liberties and N. A. A. C. P., read *Ibid.*, No. 59, pp. 6486, 7598, and 770.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

(1) Applicants for Civil Service positions are required to furnish a photograph.

(2) There is much unfair treatment in matters of rating and promotion.

As to the first, the investigation indicates that the photograph is with open acknowledgment to weed out those who look "colored."

In regard to the second, the investigation states that white carriers get preferred routes, and Negro clerks are never assigned to window duty, nor promoted beyond the grade of special clerk; and that they are never made Foreman or Assistant Foreman. In the Bureau of Engraving, no colored woman has ever been appointed to the clerical staff. The report states that in the Pension Office and in the Geological Survey, and other places, colored and white work amicably together, but points nevertheless to the open practices of segregation in some departments, emphasizing that specific cases of open discrimination are not as widespread as they have been in the past, or as many people have been led to believe. It states that there is apparently no discrimination in the Departments of Agriculture, of Labor, or of State. There seems to be little, if any, in the War Department. That which has existed in the Census Department was abolished by Herbert Hoover in 1928.

## IN THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

As a result of fifteen years' recurring opposition on the part of the national office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its branch in Washington, with the co-operation of other branches and of other organizations, segregation has ceased with the exception of discrimination in two cafeterias, one of which is in the Congressional Library. For the future the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People recommends three suggestions:

(1) Clerks who are discriminated against in the future must be ready and willing to test the legality of the discrimination.

(2) Legal action must be taken against two cafeterias, one in the Congressional Library.

(3) Efforts must be made to see how far Negro clerks are being kept from appointment and from promotion, simply because of color.

It appears then to be quite difficult to remedy such wrongs unless it is proved that there has been an infraction of the law.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Letters from the National Civil Service Commission and the National Civil Service Reform League, June 26 and 29, 1930, disclose that there is no discrimination under the rules of the service.

## CHAPTER VI

### Political Ideas and Contributing Factors

**A**T the close of the Cleveland Administration, certain eminent Negroes<sup>1</sup> such as Archibald H. Grimke of Boston and William E. Mathews of New York, argued with great plausibility that one way to convince the American people of the Negro's qualification for citizenship would be for him to learn to vote for principles rather than for party leaders. These men insisted that to take the pith out of the Democratic opposition to his appearance in politics a goodly portion of the colored voters should join themselves to that party. This type of political advocacy, being expounded by northern intellectuals at a time when the southern Negro had become accustomed to sharing heavily in the political appointments of Republican Presidents, obviously attracted little attention until the introduction of organized agitation in 1908.

As a result of this advocacy, two well defined political ideas have existed among Negro leaders

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<sup>1</sup>Washington, B. T., *Frederick Douglass*, p. 296.



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

as to how the masses may receive their rights and privileges as citizens. The first idea, promoted by Booker T. Washington,<sup>2</sup> maintained that those who would help the Negro most effectively during the next fifty years can do so by assisting in this development along scientific and industrial lines.

The policy of the second,<sup>3</sup> an outgrowth of the independent thinking of A. H. Grimke, William E. Mathews, W. E. B. Dubois, and W. M. Trotter, urged: "Agitation without submission." The *Boston Guardian*, edited by W. M. Trotter, at this time was the outstanding Negro newspaper devoted to political agitation; and remained so until the publication of *The Crisis*, just a few years later. The exponents of the latter movement realized that Booker T. Washington had been accepted by President Roosevelt as the official spokesman<sup>4</sup> of the Negro. They were also dissatisfied with Roosevelt's attitude toward the Negro soldiers in the Brownville riot, and his refusal to recognize colored delegates from the South in the Progressive Convention in 1912, and Taft's southern attitude. Therefore these independents exerted their influence through *The Crisis* and the

<sup>2</sup>Washington, B. T., *The Future of the Negro*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>3</sup>Baker, R. S., "Negro Parties," *The American Magazine*, No. 66, pp. 60-67.

<sup>4</sup>Miller, Kelly, *Race Adjustment*, pp. 290-291. "It should in all fairness be said that this position was not of Mr. Washington's own choice."

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

*Boston Guardian* causing a large number of Negroes to cast their ballots for a Democratic President. Bishop Walters and Lester A. Walton were among the prominent Negro Democrats along with Trotter who felt that by opposing the Republican administrations they might be able to gain the ear of the new Democratic administration but only to their disappointment.

It is necessary here to speak of the work of the National Association<sup>6</sup> for the Advancement of Colored People. This Association is a close organization somewhat after the pattern of the Anti-Saloon League. In its membership and among its officers are prominent white as well as outstanding colored men and women. Control of its operations is concentrated in a small board on which are eminent Whites like Clarence Darrow, William English Walling, Senator Arthur Capper, Charles Edward Russell, Herbert H. Lehman, and Florence Kelly, together with leading Negroes. It is composed of more than four hundred branches in various sections of the country, and maintains a staff of paid workers. This association has been from the beginning a political organization in the best and broadest sense of that term. It takes part in politics, believes in wise, honest, determined political activity. The business of the organization

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<sup>6</sup>*The Crisis* (1916), No. 13, p. 61.



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

is to teach the Negroes of the United States three elementary truths in politics:

“(1) It is the first duty of candidates for public office to tell their constituents what they stand for.

“(2) It is the first duty of any person, black or white, to know the attitude of candidates on matters affecting his interest before he votes for, or against them.

“(3) Whenever any man is voting for a candidate whose beliefs and intentions he does not know, that voter endangers the very foundations of republican government. This Association proposes in every way possible to make candidates for public office declare before election their attitude toward the Negro and his needs. In other words, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People utilizes then two effective methods in carrying out its programs. In the manner of group interest this organization sends out a questionnaire in order to find out the attitude of such public officials as the President, the Senators, and the Congressmen on certain problems affecting the group.”

Second, it gives advice to Negroes regarding the candidates for election and keeps before them a definite goal to be reached. Thus in 1916, *The Crisis*, official organ of the association, sent out a



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

questionnaire<sup>6</sup> to prospective Senators, Congressmen, and to the various Presidential candidates.

"To Prospective Senators and Congressmen:

"Will you, if elected in November, use the separate power of your office and vote:

"(1) To create an effective sentiment against lynching?

"(2) Against all forms of race segregation, particularly as they affect the District of Columbia and Interstate Commerce?

"(3) To secure to colored citizens a proportionate share in all the benefits of all Federal expenditures, including Federal aid to education?

"(4) To secure equal opportunities for qualified colored citizens in public office, including National Defense?

"(5) For reapportioning seats in Congress in accordance with the voting populations in all sections of the country?

"(6) To suppress peonage by the enforcement of Article 13 of the Constitution.

"(7) To repeal all statutory recognition of race for residents of the United States.

"(8) To secure absolute equality of accommodation in interstate travel."

<sup>6</sup>*The Crisis* (1916), No. 13, p. 17; *The Nation* (1920), No. 110, pp. 757-758. See questionnaire, 1916.

## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

An example<sup>7</sup> of the type of advice given by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People may be taken from the campaign of 1924:

"What we need in this campaign is non-partisan centers of discussion and information, debate, facts, statements, restatements of the function of the voter and the deep eternal significance of democracy. Let us vote next November . . . for racial, and human uplift, and not for contributions from the Party slush fund."

It was in keeping with this advice<sup>8</sup> in 1924 that Dr. John H. Holmes of New York City, sounded a call for the political independence of colored voters, urging that a new political emancipation is needed to free the Negro from political bondage, and requesting colored voters generally to concentrate upon the issues affecting themselves.

In this chapter, emphasis thus far has been upon some of the most important political ideas and factors which have contributed toward improving the general status of the Negro National Politics in the past. For clarity let us trace briefly his position in the past, and focus our attention on his position at the present with a view toward pointing out suggestions for the future.

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<sup>7</sup>*The Crisis*, October, 1924.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, October, 1924.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

### HIS POSITION IN THE PAST

It has been shown in this thesis that in less than five years after the Civil War, the Negro was in Congress, in the Republican National Conventions, taking a lead in the National Campaigns, and sharing heavily in the spoils of the Republican Party. In Congress from 1870 to 1901, he exercised his opportunity quite generally as a leader of his people to promote legislation for Civil Rights, for Federal aid for education, a National Election Law, in addition to the various measures for improvements in rivers, harbors, erection of public buildings and other requests. Two of the colored legislators were Senators, while the others were members of the House of Representatives.

After twenty-eight years, a Negro, Oscar De Priest, ward leader and former Chicago Councilman, is in Congress. Serving his first term, he has exerted much effort to get an investigation of conditions in Haiti. He is still using his position as Congressman as Langston sought to do, namely, to get colored men appointed to West Point and Annapolis. He has been nominated and elected by his party for a second term, in spite of a heavy Democratic landslide in Illinois. His position, like that of earlier Negro Congressmen, permits indirectly national representation of a minority group as well as serving his own district.



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

In the Republican National Conventions the Negro delegates from 1868 to the present have almost continuously emphasized the demands of their group, advocating remedial legislation, opposing a reduction of the numbers of members from the South, supporting the Presidential candidates favorable to their race, serving as heads of their State delegations, as members of the National Committee, and on other important Committees. Representing at least four States on the National Committee in 1892, at present he holds membership from the State of Mississippi, and in part, though without formal recognition,<sup>\*</sup> from Georgia.

In the National Campaigns no opposition has been made to his position as a leader. His method of appeal pointed to the efforts of the Democratic Party to disfranchise the group and emphasized on the other hand the appointments received at the hands of the Republican Party. In recent years a number of Negroes dissatisfied with the indifferent attitude of the Republican Party toward the enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, and other grievances, have gone over to the Democratic and Socialist Parties.

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<sup>\*</sup> "Committeewoman says Republicans Ignore Her," *Pittsburg Courier*, December 7, 1929.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Striving in the National Campaigns for many years, the party leaders received recognition in the form of personal appointments of note. Many of the major appointments which were formerly theirs, such as Minister to Haiti, Register of the Treasury, Consulships to Brazil, Russia, and Nicaragua, most of the Collectors of Internal Revenue, Ports, and Customs, have been denied them. There has been, nevertheless, a tendency seemingly for each President except Wilson and Harding to add one or two new appointments.

This decline of recognition by party leaders has had as its concomitant effect a failure of the dominant party in many instances to put forth legislation even after recommended by the President except in requests for Federal aid to education.

The number of Negroes employed in Federal service is almost proportionately fair, yet when the average salary is taken into consideration—\$1,243 a year—it appears that the largest number of positions are of low rank. Complaints have been filed concerning promotions by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Most discrimination in Federal service that existed in the past has been recently abolished.

The attitude of the present administration seems quite clear. The President is emphasizing



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

the improvement of Negro business through the co-operation of its small business unit, by indexing, and charting a well defined program, Federal aid by means of agricultural extension work in the South, and appropriations for Howard University.

### HIS PRESENT POSITION STATED

For many years the Negro has been considered,<sup>10</sup> and rightly, a static fixture in Republican machinery. His point of contact with administrations had been a group of colored politicians in Washington ready to take advantage of the situation. This type of patronage as pointed out has sharply diminished. That is partly because mere patronage is no longer the answer to the Negro's demands for essential justice; partly because the machine politicians no longer control the situation among colored voters as it was once supposed they did. The *Pittsburg Courier*, a leading Negro weekly, writes:<sup>11</sup>

"It is far more important . . . that nine million Negroes have the ballot than a handful of sleek colored gentlemen have the lucrative privilege of hawking Postmasterships."

<sup>10</sup>Seligman, H. J., "The Negro's Influence as a Voter," *Current History* (1928), No. 28, pp. 230-231.

<sup>11</sup>The *Pittsburg Courier*, October 12, 1929. See "Negroes Urged to Use Ballots," Report of 20th Annual Session, N.A.A.C.P. N.A.A.C.P. went on record as favoring investigation of Southern politics, and alignment with forces for honest government, *Chicago Defender*, July 6, 1928, reported in *The Crisis* (1929), No. 36, p. 265.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Despite the political conditions of voting in the South, the Negro is at present said to possess a potential power as a voter in the North. W. E. B. Dubois, writing<sup>12</sup> in *The Nation* in 1920 with regard to this power, emphasized the number of Negro voters in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Ohio. He stated that with this vote the Negro could greatly influence the complexion of Congress. His vote might easily decide which party should control the South. The Negro's effective voting power,<sup>13</sup> then, is concentrated in northern States. There he maintains a balance of power, especially in the middle western States where the balance is closest between Republicans and Democrats. There the colored citizen, numerically strong, educated, able to act as a voting bloc, constitutes a problem that perplexes many a white politician.

Several factors have recently contributed to the Negro's position as a balance of power by welding for him a national political consciousness which likely will bespeak much for his possibilities in the future. It has been pointed out that the use of the race issue in the 1928 campaign indulged by the major parties elicited the protest of leading

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<sup>12</sup> *The Nation*, No. 110, pp. 757-758.

<sup>13</sup> Seligman, H. J., *op. cit.* (1928), pp. 230-231.

## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Negroes in the Republican, Socialist, and Democratic Parties. The campaigns for Congress that year in New York, Chicago, and St. Louis, coupled with the subsequent election of DePriest and the subsequent efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to bring about the defeat of Judge John J. Parker<sup>14</sup> for a place on the United States Supreme Court, have apparently welded a Negro national political consciousness.

Concerning this political consciousness, the *Washington Post*, admitting the Negroes can easily decide contests between the big parties in a half dozen or more large northern States, says:<sup>15</sup>

"All they need are political mindedness, cohesion, and management; and in the result of the fight over Judge Parker there are makings for all those requirements."

To this opinion Walter White, now Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, has added:

"From the way in which the Senators in Washington received me as a representative of the

<sup>14</sup>Ulm, A. H., *Washington Post*, May 18, 1930, pp. 13-14, "Howard and Wilson for Davis in Pennsylvania." *Washington Tribune*, May 30, 1930, Perry Howard, National Committeeman for Mississippi, and Finley Wilson, G.E.R. of I.B.P.O.E.W., campaigned for Secretary Davis against Senator Grundy, a supporter of Parker. They claim that Secretary Davis received 95 per cent of the Negroes' vote in the primary, aiding the defeat of Grundy.

<sup>15</sup>Ulm, A. H., *Washington Post*, May 18, 1930, pp. 13-14.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and from what I learned in conversation with the best informed newspaper correspondents I can say that the Negro's star, politically, and on a national scale, is in the ascendant."

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The present position of the Negro has been pointed out, but what of his future? Upon one thing many Negro leaders agree: that there must be an effective organization of the colored voters; and this of course presumes a proposal of some sort of plan or program for his national political advancement.

Three means of simplifying this problem have been proposed. The first is by organizing as a Negro Party, or backing an organization such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. *The Crisis* in 1916 held that "the only effective method in the future is to organize in every Congressional District as a Negro Party to endorse those candidates—Republicans, Democrats, or Socialists—whose promises and past performances give greatest hope for the remedying of the wrongs done the Negro race."

If no candidate fills that bill they were urged to nominate one of their own and give that candi-



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

date their solid support. It was stated that this policy, if effectively and consistently carried out, would make the Negro vote one of the most powerful and effective of the group votes in the United States. And in complying with this request, Negroes in Tennessee organized<sup>16</sup> the Lincoln Republican League and elected Robert R. Church as a member of the State Executive Committee. Independent tickets<sup>17</sup> were put out by Negroes or black and tan factions in Virginia, Arkansas, Florida, Ohio, and Texas.

This program was not free from criticism even within the colored ranks. Kelly Miller, a critic of national administrations and Negro political policies, while describing the political leadership of the past, observed<sup>18</sup> as an outstanding fact that no constructive, or comprehensive program has as yet been forthcoming. One thing to be said concerning the advocacy of W. E. B. Dubois in 1916, is that even though no concerted efforts were put forth to carry out that program on a comprehensive national scale the suggestions appear to have motivated Negroes in working up their own political organizations in centers of colored population.

The program just mentioned has not worked in the South, hence the need of another program.

<sup>16</sup>*Negro Year Book* (1918-1919), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* (1925-1926), p. 61.

<sup>18</sup>Miller, Kelly, "Political Policy of Negro Voters Outlined," *Negro Year Book* (1925-1926), pp. 68-69.

## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

Thus James W. Johnson would propose<sup>19</sup> as a step toward rebuilding the Negro politically in that section, that as soon as he is able, he should go into the Democratic primaries and vote for what he believes to be the best men for local offices. For a long time the Negro should not bother himself about helping to elect Republican Presidents—or Democratic ones either. By eschewing national Republican politics he will undermine all arguments about his being a mere tool and monkey paw of alien Yankee domination.

A third interesting proposal<sup>20</sup> by L. M. Murray, Negro, editor of the *Washington Tribune*, would seek to improve the Negro's position by a coalition with Labor. He contends that this was demonstrated in the Parker case, and that if the Negro is to profit from that experience he will begin now to organize with the view of presenting his voting strength to Labor for an alliance which, when formed, could control the Congressional and Senatorial elections in a sufficiently large number of districts as to give the Labor-Negro combine the whip-hand over Congress and control many Federal policies.

Perhaps one may view with indifference each of the programs proposed, but the fact remains that

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, J. W., "The Negro Looks at Politics," the *American Mercury* (1929), No. 18, pp. 88-94.

<sup>20</sup> The *Washington Tribune*, editorial, May 30, 1930.



## POLITICAL IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

there is need for a comprehensive program for the Negro in National Politics in the future. Because of the marked difference between the position of the Negro in the South from that of the North such a program should vary according to the needs of each section. Negro forces should be organized where strength may be gained; alignments should be made with other groups when profitable, and they should elect members of their own group to office if it is considered to be an advantage. In this connection, the *Pittsburg Courier*<sup>21</sup> has remarked:

"What the Negro will get hereafter in politics will not be due to sentiment, or intra-party delegate buying, but will be due to the power of his massed vote in districts where he is numerically supreme. Of course, this will not mark the attainment of the ideal for which we are striving, but it will mean a great step forward."

That there must be leadership for such a program is admitted. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a non-partisan organization, has supplied leadership from 1912 up to the present. Its strength since the Parker defeat, has gained in influence among the masses. As shown by the *Washington Post*,<sup>22</sup> the result of that fight probably established for that

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<sup>21</sup>"The End of an Era," *Pittsburg Courier*, July 6, 1929.  
<sup>22</sup>The *Washington Post*, May 18, 1930.



## THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN NATIONAL POLITICS

organization a place in the Negro world comparable to that long exercised by the Anti-Saloon League in the organized prohibitionist sphere. It appears that the position of the Negro in National Politics for some time in the future, will depend largely upon the leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

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